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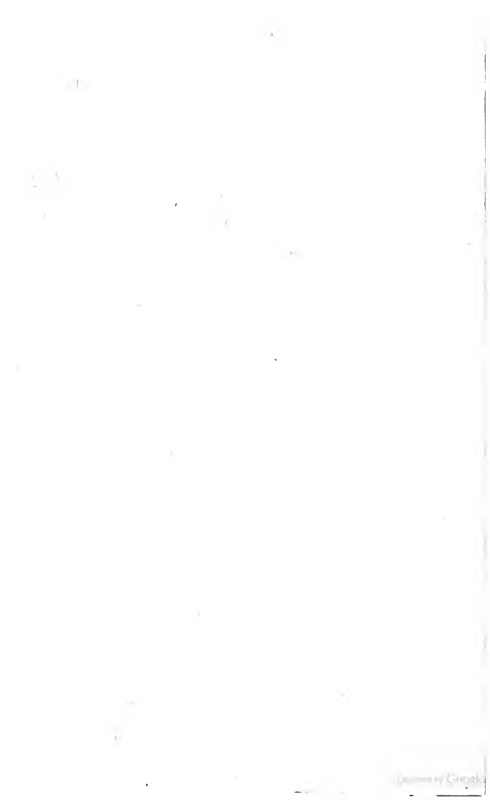
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FREEMEN AND SLAVES,

An Historical Tragedy

IN FIVE ACTS,

BY

WILLIAM BALL.



"E tornerò con le man vote al petto."

DANTE.



LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1838.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HODGSON AND PALMER,
SAVOY STREET.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SPARTACUS, *leader of the Slaves.*

CRIXUS, }
BEBRIX. } *Gauls.*

FESTUS, *son of Spartacus.*

PANSA, }
LEPIDUS, } *Romans.*
LENTULUS. }

*Slaves, Gladiators, Pirates, Messengers, Soldiers, a
Questor.*

FAUSTA, *wife of Spartacus.*

FULVIA, *daughter of Pansa.*

RHEA, *a female Slave.*

FREEMEN AND SLAVES.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

Atrium of the house of Pansa in Pompeii.

PANSA, FESTUS, FULVIA, FAUSTA, RHEA, SLAVES.—*Packages lying about, as though preparations had been making for departure.*

PANSA.

Is all now ready for to-morrow's task?

FESTUS.

All is now ready.

PANSA.

Let these weary ones

Take food, the recompense to labour due;

B

And, Fausta, see the evening meal, to night,
Be made the richer by some loan of wine
Borrowed from amphorae that last year filled.
To-morrow to the mountain we repair,
Whither the merry vintage calls us all
To gather up earth's bounty ; and no cause
Can, more than this, do grace or lend excuse
Unto a lib'ral or an unthrift hour.
Go all away ; this ev'ning hath no claim
Upon your services.

SLAVES.

Long life to Pansa !

PANSA.

Enough : be wise throughout your merriment,
And look that, ere the morning blush to see
How sluggard is this world, we may be all
Afoot and climbing the grey mountain's side,
With willing hearts and limbs, to do the work
That is the price of nature's benefits.

SLAVES.

Long life to Pansa !

PANSA.

Go ; that is enough.

SLAVE.

Enough for thee to hear, but not enough
For us to say, if but a hundredth part
Of all thy kindness we would tell.

PANSA.

Enough !

SLAVE.

Out of ten hundred masters, the sole one
That cares for his poor slaves.

PANSÁ.

Nay, prithee, peace !

Think not of ill by others done, but leave
The care on't to the gods. Now, go your ways.
Remember, Fausta, to bestow the wine
I told thee of, on my good fellows, here.

FAUSTA.

It shall not be forgotten.

PANSÁ.

Very well.

What ails thee, Rhea ? I have seen thee nod
And leer and laugh and beckon, in a way
That, on this merry night, shall pass unchecked ;
Though, for good manners' sake, when I am here,
I should be better pleased thou didst it not.

RHEA.

I am not well.

PANSÁ.

Not well ?

RHEA.

I am impatient.

PANSÁ.

Of what ?

RHEA.

Of nothing.

PANSA.

Then it is not illness.

RHEA.

I thought impatience was a malady,
But that slaves got it not.

PANSA.

Why in some sort—

Go, fellows, go—

[Exeunt Slaves.]

—it is a malady,

Chiefly of unripe years, and cured by time,
In men and maids. Be patient, then, meanwhile.

RHEA.

I will, so please you.

PANSA.

It shall please me well.

So, leave us now.

[Exeunt RHEA and FAUSTA.]

FULVIA.

Do we all go, to-morrow,

Up to the hills?

PANSA.

Why no; thou may'st remain

Here in Pompeii, if it likes thee well.

I hear that Lepidus from Capua comes

To waste some time here, and thou wilt be glad

To see him.

FULVIA.

Nay, not I.

PANSA.

What not to see

The festive Lepidus,—thy wooer, too?

FULVIA.

There is no man I so much wish to see
No more ; nor one who hath so many gifts
That I . . detest . . . beyond the power to tell.

FESTUS.

The Lady Fulvia would be sad alone,
Left in a city's solitude.

PANSA.

'Tis true :

'Then she shall go with me and thou canst stay ;
'Though, truly, we leave little to take care of.

FULVIA.

Lock but your doors, the house protects itself.
We live in a great city where men fear
Not violence, but fraud.

PANSA.

'Tis very true.

FULVIA.

And we should all miss Festus,—I should say—
The slaves would miss him much : he cheers them all
To labour, by his labour and his mirth.

PANSA.

'Truly I think, myself, that we should all—
'That is, the *slaves* !—miss Festus very much.

FULVIA.

'Tis certain.

FESTUS.

I should much rejoice to come.

PANSA.

Now, by great Jove ! there seems no remedy ;
We must all go together.

FULVIA.

It were best.

PANSA.

Well, be it so.

FESTUS.

Then, all shall be disposed,
And we will hail to-morrow on the hills. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.

*Portico belonging to the house of PANSA at Pompeii.**Enter RHEA.*

RHEA.

The hour is now at hand, the stranger waits
Behind the fig-trees and the trailing vines
That shade our garden seaward. In our halls
The day hath saddened to a sober tint,
And weary labour hath had leave to pause,
While from Vesuvius, wand'ring to the sea,
Grey evening, hand-in-hand with the cool breeze,
Comes with her comfort, to this hour of rest.
Yet Fausta lingers still. 'Tis folly this !
Twice have I caught her eye, and made her signs,
And, if I understood myself, each wink

Said most distinctly, " List ! I've that to tell,
Is worth a woman's hearing." Had she thus
Invited me to come, I had been here
Ten times already, though the consequence
Had been ten times a whipping. Yet she still
Tarries within.

[Slave crosses the stage.

Come hither, goodman drudge.

SLAVE.

Give thee good ev'ning, Rhea. Wherefore, now,
That there's no moon to gaze upon thy cheek
And pale at finding the sun's kisses there,
And while we are so merry in the house,
Stayst thou amidst these twilight dews and flowers ?
Come with me, pray ! Bestow on us the time.
There is a better market for thy smiles
Within, than here.

RHEA.

I shall come in anon :
Meanwhile do thou to Fausta say, apart,
That near the spreading plane-tree, Rhea waits
And would have speech of her.

SLAVE.

I'll do it, straight,
If thou wilt promise like a man to talk
When Fausta comes ; that there may be an end
To thy discourse ere ev'ning wears to night,
And thou mayst keep some words to spend with us.

RHEA.

Do as I say, or I'll have words with thee—

Nay, blows, belike.

[Exit Slave.]

Festus is now at home,
Our handsome freedman, and good Fausta stays
To cast kind looks upon him and to sigh,—
The silly woman ! when myself am here,
That know the trade of hearts to gentle hearts,
And sigh, industriously, from morn till night,
Sighs that would waft a galley o'er the sea,
And all in vain ! Yet Festus, being young,
Hath surely some discretion, like myself,
And can discern a goodly difference.
I fear the Lady Fulvia hath the heart
Of the brave Festus who, in Sicily,
During the servile war, her honour saved
And her sire's life, good Pansa's, from the slaves,
Whose justice or whose vengeance was at point
To make an end of both. But, Fausta comes :
Softly, good tongue ; this prattle is too wild
For any confidant less wise than I.
Fausta ! 'Tis she.

Enter FAUSTA.

FAUSTA.

What wouldst thou, Rhea ? Say !

Twice hast thou turned me from my ev'ning task,
And my sad thoughts, by nods and meaning smiles
That I would fain not heed ; nay, that I heed

Only to save thee from ungentle words,
Or anger, that this game, thy idle wont,
May pluck upon thee, maiden. Hast forgot?
This is not Thrace or Gaul, nor these the woods
And valleys, the dear dwellings of our sires—
Our vanquished, slaughtered, unforgotten, sires !

RHEA.

Fausta, I know full well we are in bonds,
And, when they weigh not lightly, 'tis my care
To ease them as I may. Yet in the house
Of our good master Pansa——

FAUSTA.

Rhea, peace !

The goodness of our master is, to be
Less evil than his fellows, and no more.
What ! canst thou be in bondage, and content ?

RHEA.

I say not so : I hate the bonds I wear.
I would be free to take the thing I covet
Unquestioned, though in a king's lap it lay,
And Envy watched it with a tireless eye.
I would cast off this brief and common vest,
And move adorned in purple, and in gems
Whose price might ransom Rome—were she in bonds ;
And then a hundred slaves should wait my will,
Look anxiously towards me, and obey——

FAUSTA.

And make thy board and slumbers insecure !
Thou wouldst be, then, a tyrant, and have slaves ?

RHEA.

Nay, not a tyrant ; but I would have slaves
To tend, obsequiously, a thousand wants
That, I am very sure, I then should have,
Though now I know them not. Oh, the dear thought,
That makes me quiver as my fancy runs
O'er all the services I should require,
If fortune gave me such necessities !
To take a bath I should not wander, then,
To where our river Sarno, 'mid the roots
Of the old hill, hath made a secret place,
A sparry cave, where daylight seems a guest
And not a master ; and where myrtle bowers
And hiding trees, have made the waveless pool
A mystery of quiet loneliness.—
No longer there, but in a marble vase,
With heated water filled, I should recline
And gaze on storied walls, or, rising thence,
My slaves would o'er me pour, from head to foot,
A costly orient perfume that should fold
In dreamy sweetness every dearest sense,
And give me pleasures from Elysium stolen.

FAUSTA.

Wouldst thou betray thy beauty to a train
Of human enemies that serve and hate thee ?

RHEA.

Oh, Fausta, hush ! to serve is not to hate.

FAUSTA.

It is with me.

RHEA.

I had forgotten that.

FAUSTA.

I was a happy mother, happy wife,
And free and peaceful was my distant home :
War made me then a slave. Thou knowest well
That shame or servitude are the good gifts
Of Rome to conquered women ; but to men
Her gifts are death, or fetters worse than death.
I had a husband—the great Gods alone,
Winnowing the world, could find his fellow out ;
My love and his desert no words can tell :—
Where is he ?

RHEA.

Dead ?

FAUSTA.

No—worse ! he is disgraced !

I had a daughter, Rhea, and I live—
A *mother* lives—to thank the gods she died !
I had a son——

RHEA.

No more ; thy many griefs——

FAUSTA.

I say I have a son, a noble youth,
Brave, happy, free !

RHEA.

This is good comfort, then.

FAUSTA.

The comfort is, I dare not own my child.

RHEA.

Not own him ?

FAUSTA.

No ; lest his prosperity
Take blight from the infection of my lot,
And my son live to curse me.

RHEA.

Oh, forbear !

These thoughts disturb thy reason. Thou art wise,
But, in the combat of this life, hast got
Some hurt that does not heal.

FAUSTA.

Nor ever will.

RHEA.

And when the enmity of chance offends
The ancient bruises of thy sorrows past,
'Tis bitter for thee, and too hard to bear.
Let us, then, change our theme ; 'tis ever wise
To shun the warfare of afflicting thoughts.
Now hear me, and, I pray thee, heedfully.
I come from one who is a suitor bold,
Not to thy beauty, but to the dark gift
Thou hast of seeing dimly, from afar,
Before their birth, th' events of future time.
I tremble inly as I speak of it !

FAUSTA.

Is he a Thracian that demands my aid ?

RHEA.

He is, and must have known thee, too, right well ;

At least he says that, once, this fillet bound
The maiden tresses of thy raven hair.

FAUSTA.

What band is that? quick, Rhea, give it me.
Now all heaven's stars be thanked! 'tis he at last!

RHEA.

Who is he, then?

FAUSTA.

Where is he—tell me, where?

RHEA.

The shadow of our mountain eastward falls,
And with the cloud of darkness will he come.

FAUSTA.

And of that darkness will he be the god,
The thunder of that cloud.

RHEA.

But who is he?

FAUSTA.

My husband.

RHEA.

Hush!—steps in the orange grove.—

FAUSTA.

'Tis he! he comes! Go, Rhea, to the house;
Baffle inquiries after me; ere long
I will return, and screen thee from all blame.
Come, my good Rhea.

RHEA.

Let me see you meet.

FAUSTA.

No, my good Rhea. Come. No witnesses!

[Leads RHEA out.]

SCENE III.*An orange grove.**Enter FAUSTA.*

FAUSTA.

This is a fitting hour; the darkness hides
Blushes and chains. I would not be ashamed
To meet my husband.

Enter SPARTACUS.

SPARTACUS.

Fausta! hist!

FAUSTA.

Who speaks?

SPARTACUS.

'Tis I.

FAUSTA.

Oh, Spartacus!

SPARTACUS.

My noble wife! *[They meet.]*

A freeman now embraces thee.

FAUSTA.

Thou free!

By service, purchase, manumission, how?

SPARTACUS.

By no such means. On Baiae's golden shore,
There is a prison called "the hundred cells,"
And there was I confined, with many more.
A passage, left for air, led to a cliff
That beetled high above a sandy beach
Washed by confineless billows, which, methought,
Cried, scornfully, "Slave, slave!" My fellow's toil
Freed me from chains; I forced my outward way,
And stood upon the dizzy precipice.
By madness guided down a desperate path,
I reached the margin of the babbling flood,
Which, friendly then, bore me to liberty.

FAUSTA.

But when was this?

SPARTACUS.

'Twas long ago; for fate
Hath driven me since through many different lots,
To hide myself till time should wear away
The marks and memories that fetters leave.
A soldier; then a—dweller on the hills,—
My foes will call it by another name;
They have some right to do so, for 'twas they
Who made me what I was.

FAUSTA.

Not what thou art.

I joy to think thou hast a better change
To tell me still.

SPARTACUS.

But that time calls me hence,
I might tell many more. An hour will come,
And gossip's tales shall dower it with the charm
That hardship borne, and death escaped or dealt,
Throw o'er a brave man's life. Enough that, now,
I have returned a voluntary guest
To haunts where slaves and grief and guilt abide.

FAUSTA.

How sayest thou, Spartacus? A willing guest
Thou canst not be where vice and baseness dwell.

SPARTACUS.

In Capua a certain Lentulus,
Unmitigated villain ! keeps a school
Of gladiators, and grows hourly fat
Upon the blood they spill. War's violence
Or hunger made them his, bondsmen or slaves.
One of this number I ; our destiny
To learn the craft of arms, to fight and die
On the arena where the people throng—
(My curses sink them through the cleaving earth !)—
On days of great rejoicing ; or to fall
When some patrician scoundrel for a wife
Who brought him much derision and much gold,
Or son or sire, opprobrium of the state,
Ordains a gladiator's fight, and saith,
“ Let fifty couple combat, twenty die ;
Ay,—twenty, say. Th' expenses shall be mine,
And for thy zeal, good Lentulus, I'll pay.

But see they be good men, well made and bold ;
I'll have no fellows that might die without,
No carrion things that, from disease or age,
Are under bond to death. I'll have none such ;
But gallant creatures, rich in health and strength,
Brimful of life and daring, for on these,
The spear, the trident and the glaive, do deeds
That are a credit to us, Lentulus.
Fortune hath given me drachmas, and I know
How to employ them nobly, as thou seest."

FAUSTA.

But, Spartacus, thou art not one of those'
That make a trade of death in public schools,
Or in th' arena, or at festive boards,
Where the rich Roman o'er his banquet lolls,
Sips his Greek wine and jests with merry guests,—
What time the brave are dying.

SPARTACUS.

I am one.

The world with its strong arm still thrusts me on
To do the things I hate.

FAUSTA.

It cannot be,
It must not be ! What, shall these dogs of Rome,
Tired of all pleasures, taste a savage joy
While thou art perilled amid rending arms
And gushing blood and curses of despair !
I love thee better than all things on earth,
But I would bid thee die by thine own sword

Ere with such deep dishonour purchase life.

SPARTACUS.

Fausta, thou speakest well, and I would die,
Did I not live for vengeance—and for thee.
Have I not wrongs to think of? Can I not
Med'cine to ev'ry evil with the hope
To make th' accursed Romans rue the day
That made me childless, houseless, desperate?

FAUSTA.

Thy means, oh, valiant Thracian, are as nought!
Rome is a giant, whom the angry gods
Have sent to trample on this world of dust.

SPARTACUS.

Thou speakest not as I would have thee speak;
But hear me, and, when I have told my hopes,
Call on the mighty demon of thy house,
And, since he lends thee wisdom to foreknow
The tasks that destiny appointeth men,
Make use of this thy dreadful privilege,
To learn my lot on earth. That I shall die
Thou canst not hide from me. 'Tis known to all.—
The how, the when, the wherefore, I would know.

FAUSTA.

Go on: thy words and cause have wrought in me,
And, like a spell, have roused the mystic power
My birthright gave me. Lo! th' Invisible
Move 'mid their shifting clouds, and I behold
The works they shape. Before thy tale is done,
The awful vision will be at the full,

For wide and wider ope th'eternal gates
Of future times, and thousands tread the scene
In vast and various action. Haste,—go on;
Thy life already comes upon the stage.

SPARTACUS.

Thou know'st what I have suffered, dared and done,
Because the gods had given me thee to love,
And children and a home. Glad times, long gone !
I am all woman when I think of them.—
My honesty, my labour and my blood,
Were counterchanged by scoffs and stripes and bonds,
And danger and dishonour of my house.—
What follows? That I owe a heavy debt,
A lifetime of injustice, and have vowed
To pay it to its uttermost amount.
I am not weary yet, although the world
Hath tried to weary me; my arm can strike,
My heart remember still. Now to my tale.
The gladiators choose me for their chief,
And we have sworn to burst our bonds and live,
Or die the death of warriors and of men.

FAUSTA [*turning round wildly and speaking with prophetic fury.*]

Hush ! for the spirit-priests of Truth are here ;
They seize on Ign'rance by his chains of fear,
And rend his robe of darkness : I behold
The fire of striving steel, the labours of the bold.
The strife is done, the battle won,

Shrieks load the blast and crowds rush past,
And Roman eagles learn the cage at last.

Hush ! for the spirit-priests of Truth are here ;
They shout thy name, to all the land a fear ;
Cities and armies vanish ; and thy lance
Still onward points the way and thousands still advance !

The strife is done, the battle won,
Smoke climbs the blast and flames rise fast,
And Roman warriors die like slaves at last.

Hush ! for the spirit-priests of Truth are here ;
The God of battles now again is near.
Pretors and consuls perish ; and their shame
In darkness long endures upon the Roman fame.

The strife is done and thou hast won ;
Death makes a noble bondsman free
And, in the grave, hides palms of victory.

Gone is the vision, and the shades of night
Close on its many wonders.—Spartacus !

SPARTACUS.

Great priestess, say, what is my lot ?

FAUSTA.

Success.

SPARTACUS.

Ever ?

FAUSTA.

Until the day that thou shalt die.

When that shall be, the gods have not decreed.

SPARTACUS.

Then gladly I embrace my destiny,
Happy that it hath nothing I would shun.
I feel a preternatural power and light
Run through my mind, my heart and purposes.
Now, Fausta, one word more and we must part,
Till better days. This thunder-stricken hill
Shall be my first repair, and haply soon.
Come to me thither, when thou shalt have learnt
That I can guard thee : but till then, stay here ;
For I have heard thy master can be kind,
And, though a Roman, is not all a fiend.

FAUSTA.

This happens well. A villa on the hill
Is his, and thither shall we soon resort ;
For 'tis the season when our tended vines
Confide their treasures to the hands of peace.
Begone ! some slaves approach, —and yet, one word :
Thou know'st not that our son is here !

SPARTACUS.

Our son !

In bonds thou say'st ?

FAUSTA.

No, he is free ; and kind
The Roman is to him, and that hath spared
Some deed of madness, when thy Fausta stayed
And watched beside sick Pansa's fev'rish couch.

SPARTACUS.

This is strange news ! And the boy loves thee well ?
Else he is not my son.

FAUSTA.

He knows me not.

[*Slaves with lights at a distance.*]

SLAVES.

Fausta !

FAUSTA.

Some day I'll tell thee all : farewell !

SPARTACUS.

One kiss, thou noble creature.

SLAVES.

Fausta ! ho ! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Public portico near the amphitheatre of Capua. Roman soldiers seen lounging about. Slaves in attendance. SPARTACUS reposing as after exercise : LENTULUS walking to and fro.

LENTULUS.

Nepimus, say, *my* fellows are engaged ?
I would not have them idle in the schools.
They must work hard to learn their weapons well ;
And, then, I'd have the mimic fight enrage them,
Because that gives a relish to the work
When blood must follow blows. Go, see !

SLAVE.

I am come thence, and all were busy there.
Crixus and Oenomäus had ta'en arms
And 'twas a noble strife.

LENTULUS.

Good, very good !

I know they both hit hard. Get up and talk,
Thou idler. (*Spartacus rises.*) What hath weariness
to do
With steel-strung limbs like thine ?

SPARTACUS.

Something, methinks.

LENTULUS.

Nothing, I tell thee. Labour is thy rest ;
For thou art moody at all other times,
Because ambition tires and vexes thee.
Thou hast the strength of arm and strength of heart
That the craft craves, my boy, my Spartacus !
And, barring chances, there lives not the man,
Here, nor in Rome, shall see thee prostrate fall,
And, standing o'er thee, in the public eye,
Read the command to hold or deal the blow
That clears thy reckoning. Yet thou hast a fault.

SPARTACUS.

What may that be ?

LENTULUS.

There's hazard in thy work,
And thou shouldst make it gainful.

SPARTACUS.

So I do.

LENTULUS.

But not enough. Be suppler to these lords
That hire thee out to grace their merriment,
And they will pay thee better.

SPARTACUS.

But I hate
The whole of them.

LENTULUS.

Oh, fool ! what matters that !
Hate if thou wilt, but do not seem to hate ;
So shalt thou thrive. I counsel thee for good.
Thou art my debtor and I will be paid ;
But I can put good chances in thy way,
Whereby thy frequent hire would quit the debt,
And thou wouldst be thy master, not my slave,
Which now thou art ; and art most like to find,
If thou still cross the humour of the great,
And cheek their profitable sins, that bring
Food unto thee and gold to Lentulus.

SPARTACUS.

I am thy bondsman, not thy slave, and will
Work as I list. The circus is the scene
Where danger gains more glory, if less pay.

LENTULUS.

Thy glory pays not me ; I want my gold.
And be not insolent, or very soon
My kindness will wear out, and thou shalt find
A master where thou mightst have had a friend.
Bear this in mind ; the rod, the chain, the cell,

Are for the mutinous as well as slaves.
For I have patrons good, and they have power
To burst the law and let my int'rest pass,
Before the rights of such a one as thou.

SPARTACUS.

Thou darest not hurt me, Lentulus ; thou knowest
I am a mine of wealth to thee.

LENTULUS.

'Tis true ;

For that I love thee, and to prove I give
No counsel that I would not freely take,
While here we wait, I'll tell thee how I throve.
In youth I was like thee, and in a show
I' th' Coliseum I was overthrown.
'Tis unimaginable what I felt,
While I awaited death. My life was spared ;—
The mob hath whims of mercy, now and then.
I rose to fight no more, for a good chance
Taught me my fellow bondsmen's brave device
T'escape, and take away their master's gold.
It made my fortune, for I told the tale ;
But it marred theirs. I think it cost their lives.
All's luck in these things. But, since then, my wits
Have much advanced me in these careful days.
Do thou as I did. Be thy good thy law ;
And wink, till thou art blind to all things else.

SLAVES [*without.*]

He has it, Gaul ; he has it !

[*Loud cries. Enter CRIXUS, and a crowd of Slaves, Romans, and Gladiators.*]

SLAVE.

Few can stand

'Th' assault of Crixus !

LENTULUS.

Honour to the Gaul !

Crixus, I love thee well. Tell me, my man,
I think yon Oenomäus is not fit
For the arena on our public days.

CRIXUS.

He's something worn, my master.

LENTULUS.

Say'st thou so ?

Then I'll dispose of him. We shall have soon
The consular elections, and shall want
To strew the ground with dead. He'll find a place
When that day comes, no doubt; for he can die,
Though he can fight no longer.

CRIXUS [*aside to SPARTACUS.*]

Hear'st thou that ?

SPARTACUS.

Ay, and I hope to answer it ere long.
Say, are our comrades all agreed ? To-day
Was the appointed time.

CRIXUS.

All are agreed,
And wait a signal from thy hand ; some deed

To stir the blood and not to be forgiven.
We pass the gate anon ; that is the time.

SPARTACUS.

Look then at Lentulus ; keep eye on him :
Say he shall be my token to the rest.—
The man is very fit to die.

CRIXUS.

'Tis good.

I shall report it to our fellows all.

SPARTACUS.

Now, Crixus, if the gods look down on men
From their high places, and for things of earth
Feel any care ;—if they allowance make
For ignorance, and in our favour count
The little good we do ;—they shall look down
To-day approvingly ; for I will cleanse,
For ever, be the means whate'er they may,
This land of one whose soul would do the work
Of Hydra or Chimera, and rejoice ;
Whose highest hopes and purposes seem made
Of all the vileness of all things that live.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

A gate of Capua guarded by Roman soldiers. Enter LEPIDUS, LENTULUS, SPARTACUS, and a crowd that passes on through the gate.

LEPIDUS.

Good Spartacus, thy master, Lentulus,
Saith there is not a sword so sure as thine,
'Twixt this and Rome.

SPARTACUS.

He hath had proofs of it;
And shall have more, if the great gods permit.

LENTULUS.

I thank thee, Spartacus: thy arm will ne'er
Fail to do nobly, when thy heart goes with it.

SPARTACUS.

It shall do so, and I but wait the means
To give thee a conclusive proof.

LENTULUS.

Well said!

I take thee at thy word, and promise thee
Thou never shalt repent thee of thy deed.

SPARTACUS.

I know I never shall.

LEPIDUS.

By Hercules!

Thou art a nobler fellow than I thought.
Thy good intentions beggar my poor praise ;
But if my uncle Arrhius were so good
To do at once, what he must do at last,
That is, to die and leave me his full chests,
His fun'ral games should much enrich the few
That fought in, and outlived them.

LENTULUS.

'Tis well said !

I hope he is a reasonable man,
And will not live to be an enemy
To honest industry and poor men's gains. [Laughs.
Besides, he is an ancient magistrate,
And to the city owes a good example ;— [Laughs.
A thing much needed, and I would advise,
The gen'rous heart that is possessed of means
To give it,—and at once.

SPARTACUS.

Dost thou say so ?

LENTULUS.

I do.

SPARTACUS.

Then know I have the means ; the need—
Art thou, and the example. [*Stabs LENTULUS, who falls.*

SOLDIERS.

Arms ! to arms !

[*Noise of fighting without.*]

SPARTACUS.

Now, fellows, for your lives ! For Gaul and Thrace !

[*Rushes out.*

[*Great disturbance without. Enter a Messenger, who speaks to the Centurion.*]

MESSENGER.

The fugitives, but just without the gates,
Have met a body of the urban guard
And must be all destroyed.

[*Noise goes on, but gradually decreases.*]

LEPIDUS.

In happy time !

Go, see the dogs cut down. I'd go myself,
But that, perchance, that villain Spartacus
Might take me for another Lentulus,
Or treat me in like wise. Can it be true
That I have lived to praise a rebel slave,
Who, haply, thought me of no more account
Than such a thing as this ?

[*Touching LENTULUS with his foot.*

—who was my shield,—

I thank him for it, though the gods alone,
Can know if 'twas by chance or by good will.
And I bethink me now, that wretched slave,
Yon hireling, used to fight for daily bread,
If he had wanted any other death,
Might e'en have chosen mine. But yet not so ;
He could not be so mad. This vulgar wretch
Hath done him some injustice, I suspect,
And hath his due. 'Tis a shrewd hour well passed.

[*Enter MESSENGER to LEPIDUS.*]

MESSENGER.

The Gauls and Thracians have o'erpowered the guards,

Have ta'en their arms and are in swift retreat.

LEPIDUS.

Oh, Nox and Erebus ! this must not be ;

The traitors may escape with life and limb.

Haste to the forum, straight, and tell thy tale.

Our legions, under Pulcher, must pursue

These runagates ere they can gain the hills. *[Exeunt.*

END OF ACT I.

A C T II.

SCENE I.

Vesuvius. Dreary and elevated solitudes : villas, cottages, and vineyards seen below : the sea in the distance, with galleys passing in different directions. Time, sunrise.

GLADIATORS and FAUSTA.

SPARTACUS.

What mean these coward murmurs? Is there here
A Thracian or a Gaul that fears to die,
Or one that hath not often, for base hire,
Braved the worst chance of strife? Do ye prefer
The Thracian trident to the Roman glaive,
If death is still the end? or is it worse
Because it comes with honour, not with shame?
Let me not hear another say "Surrender!"
For, by the greatness of the gods I swear,
The sword that now I draw shall do the work
Of Rome upon that slave!

CRIXUS.

I say the same.

Upon this hill there's room enough to die,
If through the lines that Pulcher has drawn round us,
We are too few to break.

SPARTACUS.

Did ye not swear,
When ye were gladiators, when ye ate
The salt and scanty bread of infancy,
Which was your hire to do the work of bloodshed—
Did ye not swear, when in the public mart
Your limbs were sold for slaughter, and your task,
Your base and common drudgery, was death,
Borne or inflicted,—did ye not then swear
To shun no danger, not to grieve or groan
For hurt or maim, and, if ye recreant proved,
Were there not clubs, fire, swords, or whips, to end
A thing unworthy of the breath of life?
If any one can save you, I am he;
And if I fail, your evil is no more
Than bondage gave you without hope or fame.

CRIXUS.

What, have ye lost your stomachs all at once
For brave men's nourishment, a feast of blows?
Then cater for yourselves. I feel no pride
In being pasture for strange beasts of prey,
And eaten in an amphitheatre.
All men must choose their course, and this is mine:
I'll fight till they have hacked me into rags
That jackalls would disdain, but never yield.
Say I not well, good Fausta?

GLADIATORS.

Let her speak !

Fausta shall give us counsel.

SPARTACUS [*to CRIXUS.*]

Give them heart ;

'Tis that they want the most.

CRIXUS [*to SPARTACUS.*]

I think so too ;

And, yet, 'tis very marvellous that men

Should not have hearts. How do the villains live ?

1st GLADIATOR.

Peace ev'ry one besides ! Let Fausta speak.

2nd GLADIATOR.

Fausta is wise, and loved by all the gods ;

We will hear none but her.

3rd GLADIATOR.

She will save all.

I speak not for myself, for I would 'scape,

Only if others 'scape. If we must die

I will not flinch a foot to slip my turn.

CRIXUS.

A worthy fellow and an honest speech,

Good, sensible, and short. Give me thy hand :

There is not better breadth nor better bone

In Italy than in this fellow's skin ;

And I had been most loath to hear faint words

Piped from within, belie the man without.

FAUSTA.

I did not think to speak where men were met,

And danger was the question of the hour :
A woman's heart is not the lion's lair,
Yet here I came to share the common chance,
And shut my eyes to walk 'twixt death and life,
Thinking I should be 'compained by men,
Worthy the noble name. Did I not well ?

GLADIATORS.

Yes, yes ; speak, Fausta !

FAUSTA.

Be it so :

But only if ye are resolved.

GLADIATORS.

We are.

FAUSTA.

Then give your cause into my husband's hands :
Swear all t'obey him, and the mighty gods
Decree us victory.

GLADIATORS.

We will all swear.

FAUSTA.

To die or conquer !

GLADIATORS.

Conquer or to die !

FAUSTA.

A warrior's fame is not a woman's tale,
And who is here that knows not Spartacus—
Knows not his value in the day of blood,
In solemn council and in sudden act ?
Now all among you that revere the gods,

Learn, that once sleeping near a leafy wood
Your leader lay. From its moist secrecy
A serpent came, and round his drowsy head
In harmless dalliance wound his speckled coils.
The gods thus gave him wisdom, in the sign
That imaged immortality; and now,
I see ye ruled by his command and led
Beyond the struggle of the present hour,
To gather palms and safety and reward.

GLADIATOR.

Long life to Fausta, to the soothsayer,
That tells us truly of the good to come.

FAUSTA.

Do honour to your leader, and retire.

GLADIATOR.

Great Thracian, hail! we honour and obey thee!

SPARTACUS.

Go, friends, and keep good watch.

[Exeunt Gladiators.]

CRIXUS.

I do not hope

To 'scape from Pulcher's legions; but not fate
Shall make me die as not becomes a Gaul.

SPARTACUS.

Say not thou dost not hope: thou dost not fear,
That is the root of hope. Say thou art sure
Thou shalt escape, and I will give thee cause;
Say thou wilt live as may become a Gaul,
Free and victorious, and thy words shall be

True as though oracles had spoken them.

FAUSTA.

From this war-girded rock there is a way
Will lead us safely to the sea-washed shore,
And Pulcher shall sleep soundly all the while.

SPARTACUS.

Until we wake him with our midnight cries,
To stop his ears with death.

FAUSTA.

Upon this hill,
Midway between the summit and the base,
My master Pansa's villa stands in air,
Perched on a ledge of rock ; upon one side,
The cloven mountain opens, and a chasm
Descends to depths unknown ; but nearer us,
And rising to the flat whereon we stand,
Ascends a naked cliff, so high and steep,
It mocks at climbers.

SPARTACUS.

By that way we go ;
For there no sentinels of Pulcher watch,
Deeming such labour vain, and loving ease.
Let the men gather, from the farms around,
The tough but slender branches of the vine,
Which, twisted into ropes and lowered down,
May make us ladders, such as oft I climbed,
In days of sport, to search an eagle's nest :
For our great hope, men may do more than this.

CRIXUS.

I live again ! it gives me tenfold life
To be so near to blows and to revenge !
I go to hasten all.

SPARTACUS.

Nay, go not yet :

Within the house of Pansa there is one—
A freeman—Festus—and he is my son

CRIXUS.

Thy son, brave Spartacus ?

SPARTACUS.

E'en so. The good

Done unto him redeems the family
Of Pansa from all insult and all wrong.
Let, then, our comrades swear t' obey in this,
Or else we go not hence.

CRIXUS.

They shall obey,

And swear and keep conditions, or my sword
Shall be the only meal that they shall taste
Upon our journey hence.

SPARTACUS.

Now, then, prepare.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Villa of Pansa on Vesuvius. A precipice discovered through an archway in the back scene. The day declines.

PANSA, FESTUS, FULVIA, RHEA.

PANSA.

Say, is our meal prepared?

RHEA.

The dinner room

Is ready, and frugality is there ;
The dishes set, the cushions too are laid,
Whereon at food-time ye recline, and all
Will merit approbation if not thanks,
Except, perchance, the poor repast, composed
Of things ill-sorted all. 'Twas Fausta's task
To think of everything, and her strange flight
Hath thrown the care on me, the most unfit
Of all the household, for I never yet,
As ye all know, did such a thing before.

PANSA.

'Tis very true, and I have thought so, long,
Though I ne'er heard thee own it, until now.
But go, good Rhea ; give us but some food,
We will be patient as to quality ;
And think upon the hardship of thy lot,

As good excuse for a mismanaged meal :
Get ready then.

RHEA.

I pray you hear one word :
I did not mean to say, I did not think.

PANSA.

I think thou didst not ; thou'rt an honest girl.

RHEA.

I should be loath to be misunderstood.

PANSA.

I understood thee well enough ; go, go !

[*Exit RHEA.*

Now, Fulvia, let me hear the latest news
Of honest Lepidus. How fares his suit ?
Hast thou found out his merits yet ? Well known
As they are all to Lepidus, 'tis strange,
He makes a secret of such things to thee !
Blush not to tell the maiden mystery
Of thy heart's welfare before Festus here.
Thou dost remember yet the servile war,
When all that man or woman can hold dear,
Good Festus saved for us. Thou canst not doubt
The truth of friendship in such peril tried.
And well I know, there's not of all thy kin
One who than Festus would be better pleased
To see thee married to his liking, well,—
Not even Lepidus.

FULVIA.

Ay, married well.

PANSA.

And to *his*' liking, as I said before.

FULVIA.

What may you mean? There's nothing in the words,
But something in the manner that seems strange.

If Festus thinks I am a fitting wife
For Lepidus, I shall be—very—glad.

PANSA.

Ay, so I thought.

FULVIA.

And I will marry him,
If Festus thinks I ought.

PANSA.

I am rejoiced
To see my dearest and my only child,
Obedient thus to—Festus.

FESTUS.

Think not, Sir—

PANSA.

Not think? why not?

FESTUS.

I mean, do not believe—

PANSA.

What! not believe my daughter? by your leave,
I will believe her though. I've given her cause
To see in me a friend, for all my life
Hath had two purposes, no more: the first,
To be beloved by those I love;—the next,
Honoured by those I honour. In this last

I have succeeded well, and in the first
Wouldst thou persuade me that I can have failed?
Speak for thyself; my daughter, I am sure,
From my perusal would not lock her heart;
For well she knows the wishes I found there
I should strive hard to make my own. If then
I love to read there, but to find the way
To do her pleasure and to give her peace,
Why should she close the book against me? Where
Look for a safer, better confidant?

FULVIA.

Dear father, there is none I love so well!
Forgive me then—

PANSA.

Forgive, for loving me?
Rather, thou shouldst entreat me to forgive
This boy his doubts of thee, or fears of me,
That—seal his lips.

FESTUS.

I have no doubts or fears
Of noble Pansa, gentle Fulvia, none,
That either mean offence, or pardon need.
If I have doubts and fears, they plague myself,
But bear no malice to the friends I love.

PANSA.

I think thou truly lovest me.

FESTUS.

I do.

PANSA.

And Fulvia too.

FESTUS.

I do,—that is—respect :

I do respect the lady Fulvia much.

PANSA.

Good ; and as thou hast given me good cause,

I love thee, Festus ; so does Fulvia too.

FULVIA.

I do,—that is—

PANSA.

That is, you do *respect*.

FULVIA.

What may this mean ?

FESTUS.

I know not.

PANSA.

Nor do I,

What it may mean ; but there is much respect

Between you both : therefore, good Festus, tell

The lady Fulvia, whom thou dost respect,

She will do well to marry Lepidus.

You heard her say she'd do it ; therefore, speak.

FESTUS.

I cannot—for—my place gives me no right—

PANSA.

Nay, then, take mine ; I give thee up my right,

So thou wilt speak the praise of Lepidus,

To spur the slow decision of this maid.

'Thou knowest well the Capuan Lepidus,
'The patron of prize fights and fooleries,
Or anything where wealth alone can buy
'The brief distinction of the public smile.
Tell her thou think'st he is an honest man.

FESTUS.

I think he is a reptile that I hate !

PANSA.

Oh, all ye gods ! but this is passing strange !

FESTUS.

Pardon me, noble Pansa.

FULVIA.

Pardon, sir ;

He meant not what he said.

PANSA.

Ha ! sayst thou so ?

Why, then, I pardon him. Well, hate him, then ;
But name, in charity, some worthier man.

FESTUS.

I know of none.

PANSA.

Nay, this is stranger still !

What, none are worthier than Lepidus
To match with Fulvia ?

FESTUS.

No, I said not so.

I cannot speak to this. Pray, then, permit
That to my ev'ning duties I withdraw—

PANSÁ.

Ere dinner's done ?

FULVIA.

Grant me thy leave to go—

PANSÁ.

I have some more to say. What mystery's here ?

I ask a service of my early friend,

And, like the world, he begs he may withdraw :

I have a most dear daughter whom I love

More than the deepest pulses of my heart—

FULVIA.

Oh ! my dear father, for the benefits

That thou hast showered on me I cannot make,

Out of my insufficiency, return

To pay the tithe of half my debt ; but all

That love can offer or that love can ask,

With a most free and honest soul I bring,

And pray thee to accept it for my sake !

PANSÁ.

But I am old, and ere I die would find

Some one to make thee happy when I'm gone ;

I would commend thee to the safer guard

Of younger, stronger arms than mine, that would

Embrace thee with as great and sure a love.

I ask thee, child, to aid me in my search.—

What is thy answer ?

FULVIA.

That I can have none ;

I am not happy, and it were not wise

To leave me to the danger of such choice.
I think—that is, I fear—that I should choose
Some one that loves me not.

FESTUS.

That could not be ;
It were impossible to choose so ill,
To take amid ten thousand the sole one
Whom nature cursed with utter idiocy !

FULVIA.

Can Festus flatter ?

PANSA.

By my troth, that seems
A most superfluous question !

FESTUS.

'Twas too bold—

PANSA.

No more, sir !

FULVIA.

My dear father !—

PANSA.

Hold your peace !
What, can I never speak ? have I not been
'To thee a father and to him a friend,
Deserving much of both ?

FESTUS.

Most true !

FULVIA.

Most true !

PANSÀ.

There's not a kinder man in all this world
Than I, and some men say that I am wise,
At least in household things; yet I'm not called
To counsel by my daughter and my friend,
When they are vexed with doubt and with distress!

FESTUS.

I think there never was a man more loved
Or honoured, Pansa, than thou art by me:
But there are sorrows no man can disclose,
And doubts that no man can resolve. Thus much
For me. Thy noble daughter hath, I think,
No grief, no doubt—

PANSÀ.

Then why have I such pains
To worm your secret out?

FESTUS.

Oh, heavens!

FULVIA.

Our secret!

I have no secret.

PANSÀ.

None? thou art not happy;
What is the cause?

FULVIA.

Alas! there needs no more
Than to hear words unkind from one so dear,
From an indulgent father!

PANSA.

Then I think

Thou hatest Festus ?

FULVIA.

All the gods forbid !

PANSA.

Look, how I thrust between you to find out—
You love each other !

FESTUS.

Oh, forgive a fault

My heart committed, but my tongue ne'er told !

PANSA.

That thou didst never tell it, was a fault ;
I might have died and left my work undone,
My daughter unprotected. Fulvia, speak !

FULVIA.

My father, I had never read my heart
Enough to know the meaning of its pain.

PANSA.

But now ?

FULVIA.

Oh, Festus !—

FESTUS.

May I love thee now ?

PANSA.

Love and be happy both : I am content.

FESTUS.

Speak, dear one !

FULVIA.

I am thine.

PANSA.

Thanks to the gods,
There is one sorrow less ! Now to our meal.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.*Same as before.—The moon gradually rises.*

PANSA and FESTUS.

PANSA.

The day, my Festus, hath performed its part,
And sad-browed night comes at the promised hour,
To stop the busy hand of industry.
And now the god of sleep, bid in the dark,
Scatters his 'sweet and drowsy charms around,
That film the o'erwatched eye, and to the mind,
Hard laboured, lend forgetfulness and dreams.

FESTUS.

The shadows had drunk up the light that still
Lingered upon the mountain's purple head ;
But Dian, see ! hath lit the lamp of night
And hung it up amid the stars of heaven.
Now all is quiet round.

PANSA.

But is not peace ;

And I would tell thee, Festus, ere I rest,
That we must not forget a Roman camp
Hath brought its licence to our rustic vales.
I say not this, that I may slander Rome ;
That were most wrong, for I have served in Spain,
In Greece, and Asia, and I have not known
Men in the weeds of peace, more just and sage
Than Roman warriors when the blood was calm,
The sword unbelted, the broad shield unbraced,
And all the ire and use of strife forgot.

FESTUS.

It may have been so, haply, in the East,
Where Mithridates battled, or in Spain,
Where brave Sertorius wakes their virtue oft,
By nightly sallies, daily calls to arms,
That puzzle wisdom, and make shrewd men doubt
Whether the safer side be Spain or Rome.
But it is not so here ; for Pulcher's band
Hold themselves brave when they do rustics wrong,
Or practise insolence on unarmed slaves,
Or on free maidens, whom the vintage calls
To modest and to necessary toil.

PANSA.

Ay, Festus, it is often so ; the ill
That soldiers do at other men's command,
Teaches them to do evil for themselves.
I speak not now of legions who have fought

More battles than each man has numbered years,
And in the eye of captains whose few words
No one could live and gainsay, by whose side
'Tis an estate of honour to have bled.

FESTUS.

But that it were rebellious, I would say
'Gainst Pulcher's cohorts I would draw my sword,
Rather than fight to aid them. They are all
That soldiers should not be; undisciplined,
Luxurious, dissolute; they pass their time
In feats that would put daggers in the hands
Of Peace herself, or in dishon'ring brawls
Or riots they both waste their minds and means,
And buy the sadness of infirmity,
Of sickness, or of premature old age,
To dim the sunshine of their days of strength

PANSA.

These fellows are the growth of idle times,
And oft their blood breaks out in rude exploit,
That makes them feared where wealth or beauty dwells.

FESTUS.

And common fame proclaims they both are here,
And common fame says true.

PANSA.

Look to our doors,
Good Festus, therefore; for although the hill
On this side is so naked and so steep,
That nought but birds could reach us from above,—
Whence I fear nothing from the hunted slaves;

Yet I am something, though not much, afraid
Of our good friends, the hunters; for the way
Is broad and easy hence unto the plain,
And night gives evil counsel very oft.

FESTUS.

It shall be cared for; I will arm the slaves
And watch with them myself, throughout the night.
But I would ask, now that our wines are made,
Why stay you here, since you are edile named
Of Nola, and require some time to change
The habits, uses, pleasures, and affairs,
That here have taken root and grown to strength.

PANSA.

I have resolved to go, and day by day,
Wonder I tarry still, and, strange to tell,
Still find I seek excuses for delay.
But this is age; this tardiness doth Time
Drop from his wing upon our purposes.
Moreover, travelling with but slender guard,
And with a maiden and my household gods,
I half inclined to wait for quiet times.

FESTUS.

You may wait long if you do not depart
Ere Pulcher's raw militia end this war.
The mountain-hold hath caves, and glens, and woods
Enough to hide an army: want of food
Alone can conquer men our hill protects.

PANSA.

Not Pompey nor Lucullus will come here,

To chastise slaves, whom, were we not diseased
By too long peace, we should have driven with rods
Back to their Capuan kennel; and I blush
To think e'en Pulcher might of Pansa ask
Why gladiators were let loose, or why
They haunt, unpunished yet, the vine-clad mount
That gives our home its beauty, wealth, and fame.

[During this scene the Gladiators are seen to descend the precipice. They enter behind cautiously, SPARTACUS being first and stopping to listen. On a signal from him they seize PANSA and FESTUS, and after some resistance bind them.]

PANSA.

Ha ! who is here !—help, Festus !

FESTUS.

Slaves ! help, help !

Dastards ! forbear to hurt that aged man,
He shall have ransom,—but—who are ye all ?

PANSA.

Festus in bonds ! Nay then, this is an hour
That calls us not to dare, but to endure.

SPARTACUS.

Pansa can wisely answer Pulcher, now
He knows us better.

FESTUS.

Wilt thou take our gold,
And spare the lives of those that harmed thee not ?

SPARTACUS.

Who speaks ?

FESTUS.

'Tis I, the freedman Festus speaks,
And prays thee to accept of thine own good.
[Enter CRIXUS and RHEA, and afterwards FAUSTA with
FULVIA, followed by Slaves, Gladiators, &c.]

CRIXUS [to RHEA.]

Dost thou remember me?

RHEA.

'Thou gav'st me cause

If I remember right.

CRIXUS.

'Thou lov'st me still?

RHEA.

Nay, I think not.

CRIXUS.

I'm very sure thou dost:

But say, hast thou been true to me?

RHEA.

To thee?

Ay, and to many more! 'Tis now a year
Since last I saw thee. I am not so mad
To think of any unseen man so long.

CRIXUS.

I've thought of thee.

RHEA.

Marry! the marvel now?

SPARTACUS.

Festus! stand forth. Let him be guarded well.

FULVIA [*throwing herself at the feet of SPARTACUS.*]
Spare, spare! Art thou the leader of these men?
Then spare that youth, and spare this white hair'd sire,
So shalt thou gain a title to success,
Or mercy, that the gods will not forget
In their own time. Oh, spare this gentle youth!

SPARTACUS.

Why, what is he to thee? what thou to him?
He a barbarian, thou a Roman dame!

FULVIA.

He is my husband.

SPARTACUS.

He?

FULVIA.

Not two hours since
My father, my dear father, gave him me,
Because he loved us with an equal heart:
And I will buy with all the wealth I have,
And all the prayers that know the way to heaven,
Their safety, thy forbearance.

CRIXUS.

Have we time
To listen to a love-tale, Spartacus?

1st GLADIATOR.

Shall we not fire the house, and on?

2nd GLADIATOR.

Well said:

I think the whole of them have Roman throats
That would improve by cutting.

CRIXUS.

Hear me, now.

Our leader swore to spare this family ;
His reasons are his own ; I ask them not.
I swore I would obey him ; so did you,
And, by the gods ! you shall, or sup yourselves
With Pluto, trying first this weapon's edge
Upon your own false, foul, and lying throats.
Do I explain my meaning ?

GLADIATOR.

Why should we,
Wronged as we are by Rome, a Roman save ?

SPARTACUS.

Because it is my will ; and without me
Your strength is weak, your courage is despair.
My life hath passed in battles, where I learned
The art of war, which none of you here know.
Ye are the hands that thrust the mortal spear,
I am the eye that guides to where it wounds.

FAUSTA.

The gods are looking down upon you all,
And if your disobedience mars your cause,
Ye die the death of dogs. Be ruled and live !

GLADIATORS.

Long life to Spartacus !

CRIXUS.

Dally not now,
But leave sufficient guard within these walls,
And with some slaves our guides, let's straightway haste

To where, beneath nocturnal laurels, grows
Our present safety.

SPARTACUS.

You who stay on guard,
If ere the morning visit you, ye hear
No news of our success, then flee; but, mark!
If any wrong be done these prisoners,
I give my future life unto the task
Of vengeance on your heads. Go silent on. [Exeunt.

END OF ACT II.

A C T III.

SCENE I.

PANSA'S *villa*. PANSA and FULVIA.

FULVIA.

What news, my father?

PANSA.

News to make me die
Before the nat'ral time. My hair turned grey
In the brief passage of one night; and, see!
My age and my infirmities have grown
Tenfold within ten days.

FULVIA.

Nay, it is more.

PANSA.

Look on me well, and tell me if ten years
Could do the work thou seest?

FULVIA.

Pray you, be calm!

PANSA.

Calm! Is not Rome dishonoured? Am not I
To slaves a prisoner? why should I be calm?

Do I not see thee in a danger here
Greater than that in Sicily, because
Festus is captive too, and brings no aid?
Calm! I will not be calm! The ills I bear
Are such I can no longer fear the gods;
For greater evil would destroy, and death,
To thee a safety, would be gain to me.

FULVIA.

Oh! hear him not, ye gods!

PANSA.

I am not mad;
Think'st thou that I am mad, that thou dost say
"Be calm!" Wherefore should I be calm? The cause?
Show me the cause!

FULVIA.

Oh, father! I have heard
That grief holds up a glass before our eyes,
Wherein we see vast images of ill
Reflected from our fears; but take away
The glass and they are nothing, or are not
The truth that they had seemed. Few are, than I,
Less happy, and thou know'st it well, yet still
I borrow strength from hope for thee and me.

PANSA.

Talk not of hope; there is no future chance,
However happy, that can wipe away
The shame that hath befallen us. I have been,
And that by the permission of my slaves,
(Doth not the phrase sound well?) to look upon

The ruin all around ; the homesteads burnt,
The vineyards wasted, and the slaughtered men,
My friends and neighbours once ; the weeping women,
Whose griefs I durst not question, nor whose looks
Interpret to myself.

FULVIA.

Yet we are spared.

PANSA.

There is more danger in this unsought mercy
Than, with a troubled mind, I can seek out.

FULVIA.

I tremble and believe. But how hath chanced
Disaster so amazing ? Tell me all,
That I may teach my soul to meet decay
Of ev'ry earthly good.

PANSA.

This is the tale,
Which to a dreadful purpose thou must know ;
For not so hateful is this body's death,
As insult, or as pity merited,
Of those who knew us in our days of pride,
And see us in dishonor.

FULVIA.

Fear not me.

Calamity so great hath still done good,
By giving me the power and the resolve
To shun all greater evil.

PANSA.

Hear me then.

The troops of Pulcher, by their numbers weak,
Because secure, slept at the midnight hour,
And in their sleep did many hundreds die,
So sudden was the onset, and so fierce,
So vehement the labour and the wrath
Of the half madmen thirsting for their blood,
And when the host awoke, the swift surprise,
And darkness and pursuing swords and hurts,
That haste inflicted, lent the unseen foe
Numbers and strength, and the more mighty help
Of terror and despair. The Romans fled,
And through the country spread a wild alarm,
And cowed a people by the tales they told
To cloak their own disgrace.

FULVIA.

This could not last,
The day would tell the truth.

PANSA.

When 'twas too late !
The arrow that hath bounded from the string,
Stops not because the archer chides his aim.
Error believed hath wrought its miracles :
Ten thousand men have armed them, and the slaves
Now *are* the terror that our lies proclaimed them.
Friended by multitudes of ev'ry sort
They spoil and slay and overcome.

[*Enter RHEA.*]

RHEA.

Forbear

Your conversation, if its tenor be
Unfit for stranger's hearing. There is one
Come from the camp of Spartacus, that brings
Still strange and stranger news.

PANSA.

Let him come in.

RHEA.

Be frugal of thy words.

PANSA.

I will put on
The armour of philosophy, and bear
Unmoved th' extremest enmity of fate.

[*Enter a Slave.*]

SLAVE.

There's one brings news of two great battles fought
By Spartacus; both won, a pretor slain,
A consular army beaten, and its chief
Driven to flight.

PANSA.

Hum, hum !

SLAVE.

Five fasces have been ta'en,
Ten eagles, and the general's purple robes.

PANSA.

Ha !

SLAVES.

Many cities are, they say, no more :
Nola and Metapontus have been razed,
And multitudes are slain.

PANSA.

Indeed !

SLAVE.

Nay more,

Varinius—beaten—

PANSA.

Liar ! hold thy peace !

SLAVE.

I know not, but 'tis said, he will no more
Manage the war ; that Crassus will be sent
Or Pompey brought from Spain.

PANSA.

Peace, idiot, peace !

SLAVE.

My lord, my news offend thee, but not I.

PANSA.

Nay, tell the truth, thou hop'st to see me die,
Poisoned by evil tidings !

SLAVE.

Noble sir !

When all forsook thee else, I then remained,
I and good Rhea, and we still are here.

FULVIA.

'Tis very true, and much we thank you both.

SLAVE.

And still we do our service with good heart,
And humbly, if unskillfully.

FULVIA.

'Tis true !

SLAVE.

Because we love thee, and do not forget
The kindness of past years, but daily grieve
That evil came to thee.

PANSA.

Good fellow, go ;

I will not see the messenger as yet ;
The mountain air hath filled my eyes with tears.
Go to the atrium : I will come anon.—
My pretty darling, my unhappy child,—
We are undone, we are undone, undone !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Atrium of Pansa's Villa.

PANSA, FULVIA, RHEA.

[*Enter Slave.*]

SLAVE.

The messenger without demands thy leave
To bring thee the commands of Spartacus.

PANSA.

I am not master now : the messenger
Will do his pleasure, or to come or stay
There,—where he is most welcome.

SLAVE.

He shall know
All that may do him pleasure in thy words.

[Exit Slave.]

FULVIA.

Dear father, be not of calamity
The architect thyself. Oh, school thine eyes
And choose thy words, that neither may offend
Those thou canst not resist !

PANEA.

But can despise !
I am a Roman, and will still be so,
Whatever be the cost.

FULVIA.

Ah, heavy day !
Where did the bright heavens hide so great an ill ?
Last vintage time, in yon empyrean blue,
In his broad crystal kingdom visible,
There reigned a radiant spirit of joy, but now,
From the cold depths of the unfriendly sky,
Despair looks down, with fixed and glassy orb,
And kills the soul of hope.

RHEA.

Good mistress, hush !
A stranger comes ; disguise this show of grief
Lest of his arrogance it purchase more.

Enter BEBRIX.

BEBRIX.

Who's here to do me honour ?

PANSA.

I am here.

BEBRIX.

That is ill answered now. Who does the honour
Due to my office here ?

PANSA.

If thou canst name

So small a thing as that must be, I stand
Thy debtor for so much.

RHEA.

Bebrix, I think.

BEBRIX.

Who knows me here ? Now, by mine honesty,
'Thou'rt Rhea !

RHEA.

Nay, some better pledge were safe,
Thus wisely staked. I know thee to the full
As well as thou the whipping-post. That's much,
For that has been a tedious intimacy.

BEBRIX.

Ah, Rhea, times are changed, and we are, now,
The top o' th' tree.

RHEA.

What, hanged there, man !

BEBRIX.

Peace, peace !

Hanging and whipping ?—We've forgotten that,
Save for our downfallen masters. We are, now,
An army and victorious, not a gang

Of fugitives, such as we were of late.
Our leader sends me, and my errand is
To guard these Romans' persons and their wealth :—
A thing against my conscience, and against
Our just and useful practicable rule,
Which is to take whatever pleases us,
From all the world, except the mis'able :—
For they shall still have leave to keep their own.
Now that's a sweeping law ; it leaves no doubt,
No difficulty, no delay. That's mine
Which I can take ; no nonsense about right.
'Twas thus the Romans dealt with us, and thus,
In turn, we clear accounts.

PANSA.

Fellow, have done !

I sicken of thy prate, which but offends
The ear of manliness and modesty,
And proves thou art an idiot and a knave.

FULVIA.

Father, have patience with adversity.—

PANSA.

If thou hast aught to say, declare it straight.

BE BRIX.

'Tis very well. I may not harm thee, Roman ;
My fingers itch ;—but—well ; 'tis very well !
Thou'lt come with me unto the victor's camp
And talk thy fill to those that can reply.
I'll say no more ; for time rides fast away

Upon the backs of busy men, like me.
Now, Rhea, quick, and come with us.

RHEA.

What, I?

REBRIX.

E'en so; for Crixus left his heart with thee,
Or so they say: two moons have waned since then,
Perhaps he hath occasion for't.

RHEA.

His heart?

How goes he to the battle then!

REBRIX.

He left

His woman's heart, the one that falls in love,
Not his man's heart.

RHEA.

Crixus did very well,
To leave in safety here the better part,
When he went seeking how to lose the rest.

REBRIX.

Thy tongue goes nimble; would thy feet did so.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Pansa's villa.

FAUSTA, FESTUS, BEBRIX.

FAUSTA.

Thou hast a father, Festus, whose great name
O'er all the land thine eye can measure hence
Works like a spell. Speak it, and thou wilt see
Wan visages and knees addressed to flight,
Or bowing in submission. Thou'rt his son,
And thou must try to climb unto his greatness.

BEBRIX.

But to do that, would be to climb a tower :
And I, who saw thee, on thy hands and knees,
Learning to be a boy, shall see thee, then —

FAUSTA.

Thrice a colossus !

FESTUS.

I am much amazed.

FAUSTA.

Thus fathered, half thy nature's law will be
A wise ambition ; 'tis thy part of him :
My part in thee is love ; but of such kind
As is the hate we bear an enemy,
Deep, calm, and patient, and unchangeable.

FESTUS.

The tale that thou hast told me of my birth,
Confirmed by honest Bebrix, the sole friend
My harder fortunes knew, and matching well
With people and events and scenes that lie
Distinguishable still in memory,
Leave me no doubt; therefore I ope my heart
To thee, my unknown mother. May my love,
And this my tardy duty——

FAUSTA.

My brave son,
I am thy mother—love me; in return
Take, if thou wilt, my heart, for it is thine :
But to thy sire thy duty must be paid.
He calls thee to his camp and thou must go;
And neither Pansa nor his child shall learn
Thou art our son.

FESTUS.

In these new names and duties
There is a weary strangeness and surprise,
That tires awhile my untried mind; and yet,
I could almost rejoice that nat'ral ties
Thus bind me to my kind; although I fear
That in the darkness of the future shroud
Inglorious dangers, which are coming soon
To cloud with grief the faces that I love.
I cannot to the camp, nor say farewell,
To her my sometime bride, and the good man
That loved me like a son.

FAUSTA.

Have I not said

They shall be cared for, e'en like household gods?
What wouldst thou more? thou wilt not have an oath,
To shame a mother's love. Thy father's will
Should be thy rule; but now thy father's power
Is over thee, is over all supreme.

FESTUS.

It is a virtue to believe a thing
So strange, e'en though 'tis true; a hundred men,
No, not a hundred, have surprised by night
A Roman camp, and have dispersed or slain
Three thousand men! Tell this in Rome, and add
That questors', pretors', consuls' crimes have armed
All humble ranks against her, till a power
Made up of fury, misery and sin,
Goes scatt'ring desolation o'er a land:
That armies are defeated, towns are razed
By men once wont to bribe off slavish stripes
With fawning smiles or lies, or toil or tears.
Tell me these news till repetition tire
My doubts, and wear into a fixed belief.

BEBRIX.

The matter is worth saying o'er again,
But not in these brief days, when business claims
The gross amount of all men's time and strength.

FAUSTA.

Well said: we waste the day. Come, Festus, come.

FESTUS.

I tell thee, I must speak to those I leave !

FAUSTA.

Not so. They need not know thy altered lot,
Lest, haply, they should strive t'extend the arm
Of help to any others. For thy sake,
And for their better safety, to the camp,
They in our guard shall follow. Bebrix, go,
See all prepared ; we come. *[Exit BEBRIX.]*

FESTUS.

What dreadful note
Of evil to be done, do these words speak !

FAUSTA.

Some of the truth I told thee, but much more
I left untold ; because it is not wise
To empty all the heart before a man
Whom change, or mere necessity, might make
Choose something there to work his good—our harm.

FESTUS.

But Bebrix is our friend.

FAUSTA.

And, as a friend,
I will be wary in my talk with him,
That I may never fear him as a foe.

FESTUS.

Oh ! this is to forego the bloom of life—

FAUSTA.

Ay,—but to guard the fruit. Say to no man,
Here is my breast unarmed ; for if he turn

His sword against thee, there the point will strike.
Tell not to Pansa who thou art, nor why
Thou goest hence ; for, if we should succeed,
Thou need'st him not, or canst command a welcome ;
But, if we fail, thou wilt have kept his love,
For thy constrained departure none offends.

FESTUS.

This must be further reasoned.

FAUSTA.

In good time.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Camp of SPARTACUS.

SPARTACUS and CRIXUS.

CRIXUS.

I tell thee, Spartacus, thy hope is vain :
Men who have suffered much injustice long,
Learn slowly to be just, e'en when they're free.
Our fellows are marauders ; they will fight
Like Mars in battle, but, the danger o'er,
Then each will be Silenus.

SPARTACUS.

Or his steed.

CRIXUS.

Or worse, if there be worse.

SPARTACUS.

And, for their sins,

The noblest cause for which men ever fought,
Whose triumph will exalt us into heroes,
And whose defeat will sink us in the grave,
Is madly perilled ev'ry hour.

CRIXUS.

E'en so.

SPARTACUS.

No victory can prop an army up
That in the wine-pot seeks the meed of fame;
No victory is great enough to hide
The needless slaughters that our host commits
In drunken wantonness. Short-sighted wrong,
And rage and lust, and shrieks and dying groans,
Have waked an enemy that we must fear.

CRIXUS.

What enemy?

SPARTACUS.

Despair!—He stalks about
And strengthens the tired sinews of old age,
He thrusts a dagger in the maiden's hand,
He bids the peasant trample down his corn,
The matron fire her cot, and the mere child
He teaches to pour poison in our cups!

CRIXUS.

The sins of Rome have maddened us, I think.

SPARTACUS.

I think so. Do they not refuse—the fools !
Now,—while we are resistless, rich, and free—
To take escape that's offered, to o'erclimb
The Alps, and live at peace in their old homes ?
An evil day will come, and then will all
Their crimes and their defeat be laid to me.

CRIXUS.

Despite the lying slanders told of thee,
Not e'en a Roman dares deny the praise
Which, hourly striving to repress these ills,
Thy virtuous greatness hath so nobly earned,
While nations were thy witnesses.

Enter a Gladiator.

SPARTACUS.

Thy tale ?

GLADIATOR.

The pris'ners from Pompeii are arrived.

SPARTACUS.

What pris'ners ?

GLADIATOR.

I have heard no more.

SPARTACUS.

'Tis well.

Let them come here, or—take them to my tent.

CRIXUS.

I leave you then, and will inspect the posts
That front the cohorts of the pretor Arrhius.
We have deceived, but have not beaten them.

SPARTACUS.

In this great game of war, if we deceive
An enemy, it is as good as gain
A battle field, nay, better ; for a lie,
Though told by lusty trumpets, and upheld
By a false tale of numbers, cannot cheer
The common soldier, if he loses faith
Or in his leader's fortune or his skill.
The peril that he sees he still may brave,
But not the fancied dangers that he fears
In the superior cunning of the foe.
Th' unreal snares, the ambush, the surprise,
That his own mind will lay and will prepare,
Baffle his hopes and tire his courage out,
And make him listlessly perform all tasks
Thus shadowed by the darkness of his fears.

CRIXUS

Thou still hast been my school.

SPARTACUS.

Crixus, farewell !

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.

Tent of SPARTACUS.

PANSA, FESTUS, FAUSTA, FULVIA.

Enter SPARTACUS.

SPARTACUS.

Hail to my noble wife ! Fausta, come here :
I see thee with a double joy,—for, hark !—
[*Aside.*] A danger is among us, greater far
Than Crassus or Lucullus.

FAUSTA

What is that ?

SPARTACUS.

'Tis Discontent ;—but hush ! we will, anon,
Call on thy demon, and thus learn the worst.

FAUSTA.

Alas ! the power hath left me : to my call
He now is silent, and I know not why.
Yet grieve not, for the tale I told thee once
Hath still been true.

SPARTACUS.

Yea, but there was a term.

FAUSTA.

When thou shouldst—die ?

SPARTACUS.

Ay.

FAUSTA.

All the gods forbid !

SPARTACUS.

Why so say I : but hush ! this is no place,
No time to talk of things like these—hush, hush !
And, Fausta, I believe thy demon less
Than the eternal justice of the gods :
Thus, if I live or die, it is the same.

Festus comes forward and kneels to SPARTACUS.

FESTUS.

They say this is a duty ; if not so,
Think it not done. But, if thou art my sire,
Accept the rev'rence paid thee by thy son.

SPARTACUS.

Festus, stand up ; I would peruse thy face,
And read thy mother there.

PANSA.

Art thou the son,

O Festus, of this man ?

SPARTACUS.

He is my son.

I did not think to tell the tale to thee,
Nor know why thou art here.

FESTUS.

My mother, sir,
Importuned by my prayers, hath given up
The project of concealment, which, in me,
Had been a baseness to this best of men,

Who gave me, out of goodness, all he had—
His love, his fortune, and his only child.

SPARTACUS.

What Fausta hath permitted shall be well.
But comes he here to aid our noble cause?

FESTUS.

Father, he is a Roman.

SPARTACUS.

What art thou?

His help I need not : send him back—but thou?

FESTUS.

I am thy son.

SPARTACUS.

Speak !—What evasion's this?

FESTUS.

My life is thine : thou shalt dispose of it,
E'en as thou wilt; but it is fit thou know
My heart is half against thee in this war.

SPARTACUS.

Death ! 'twas my fear ! this curse was wanting still.

PANSA.

I am thy pris'ner—

SPARTACUS.

Then behave as one,
And hold thy peace ! Oh ! grant me patience, gods !
I would not be a weak and angry fool,
But crosses tire me, and the powers of mind
That once were equal to all chances, now
Begin to do their task neglectfully,

And let the passions govern.—Speak, old man :
This is thy teaching ?

PANSA.

Nay, that cannot be :
I am a pris'ner—and I “hold my peace.”

SPARTACUS.

Ha !—tell me what thou thinkest of these wars ?

PANSA.

I think I have a daughter, and she stands
Beside me, and I love her—that is all :—
An idle, old man's thoughts.

SPARTACUS.

Thy child is safe ;
Thou hast done good to me or mine, and she—
I swear that both are safe !

PANSA.

I think so too ;
Silence may keep us so.

FAUSTA.

Pansa, beware !
'Tis ill to chafe a lion. Thou art safe
But as his friend.

PANSA.

What would'st thou have me say ?

SPARTACUS.

Thou hast led armies to the battle plain,
And thou hast sat in senates : I would know,

As thou art wise, what is thy secret thought
Of these our toilsome wars?

PANSA.

'Twill not be long
Before dissension will undo your host;
Or, failing that, the Roman hand will come,
Wrest the stolen swords from your misusing grasp
And forge them into chains.

SPARTACUS.

Thy heart speaks here,
But not thy judgment. Hear my brief reply.
The slave is often the slave's enemy,
But Roman bonds have made us brothers all.
Th' injustice of the strong is, soon or late,
The medicine of the weak, and takes away
The blindness that made feeble and afraid
The mightier many.

PANSA.

If an oracle
Should tell me so, I'd not believe it still.
It cannot be that our grave government
Whose eye o'erwatches all, whose arm sustains,
By means of wise and warlike magistrates——

FULVIA.

Oh, father, be content, and say no more!

SPARTACUS.

Lust, av'rice, cruelty, injustice, pride,—
These vices govern us in human shape;
Your pretors and proconsuls are not men,

But things of utter darkness that torment
This earth, by the permission of the gods?

PANSA.

Well! wilt thou climb Olympus and disseat
The wiser justicers enthroned above?
Or, if not so, how dar'st thou touch a thing
That is, by the permission of the gods?

SPARTACUS.

Because we are permitted to destroy:
The gods have sent us for your punishment.

PANSA.

I'll talk with thee no further.

FULVIA [*to SPARTACUS.*]

Pray you, Sir,

Forbear, in pity to a daughter's tears,
To urge these questions now.

SPARTACUS.

I love thee well,

Thou fair and modest flower, and for that love
I'll think that I am wiser than thy sire,
And so forgive his heat. But go thou, now,
My wife shall take thee to the women's tent.
Rest and refresh thee there. Farewell!

FULVIA.

Farewell!

[*Exeunt FAUSTA and FULVIA.*]

SPARTACUS.

Pansa, I fear that thou dost think of me
The ill that liars tell. I therefore crave

Thy patient hearing for some passages
Of a vexed life, for I would have thee still
The gen'rous friend that thou hast been to Festus :
And when I shall have sent thee safely home,
Interpret me with charity, and be,
If possible, some little matter less
Mine enemy.

PANSA.

I am not one to thee,
But to thy cause I am a foe for ever ;
For it has shaken down prosperity,
That Roman wisdom and that Roman toil
Had built as high as heaven.

SPARTACUS.

Thou errest much ;
But hear me. I was born in past'ral Thrace,
And lived a shepherd's life of lowly peace,
And looked on happy faces in my home.
I was made pris'ner in ambitious wars,
Defending our poor village ; and in Rome
I graced a triumph, and was honoured there
By blows and scoffs of toil-stained artisans,
Who temper swords they would not dare to wield.

PANSA.

Thou sland'rest them, they dare do anything ;
But for their manners, there is much to say :—
I grant you they are bitterly ill-taught ;
I would they knew the proper use of hands.

SPARTACUS.

Or that Heaven's swiftest plague might rot them off!

PANSÆ.

I will not be infected by thy spleen :
Tell out thy tale, though it is nothing new ;
Such things will chance, for, often, after wars,
A hundred thousand slaves are sold in Rome.

SPARTACUS.

Your crime and curse, at once, is slavery.
I was the servant of a wretch to whom
His fellow-creature's life was merchandise,
And bartered daily for small sums of gold :
I slew the caitiff and escaped from bonds.
Ye know the rest ; my fellow-slaves proclaimed
An enemy to Rome who, unto all
Her foes, no matter why, right freely gave
A welcome and protection. This great land
Is by a race oppressed, inhabited :
Their labour and the soil's fertility
Give them nor food, nor raiment, nor abode
For them and for their children. I have been
A trav'ller o'er the plains and up the hills,
And down the smiling valleys, and have seen
Among them misery that even hope
No longer could deceive ; and then I said
These are the means with which a man might rend
The chains of thousands, nay, might break or tire
An empire's strength that held injustice up.

PANSÆ.

I do not see the virtue of that thought,
No, nor the wisdom. Do we kill the body
To cure it of disease? To heal one ill
Thou poisonest the vast and useful life
Of Rome, the wonder of all future times.

SPARTACUS.

Is Rome's health mine? or, because she is great,
Shall I kneel down, and on my slavish neck
Place her destroying foot and cry out, "Spare!"
The Roman lords within their triple fence
Of power, and ease, and pleasure, know not yet
The dangerous nature of the woes they scorn.
For your slaves hate you, though they crouch and cringe,
Build up your monstrous dwellings, work your fields,
Level your gardens, raise your aqueducts,
Pierce a thick hill's solidity, or hang
Green woods, for beauty, on repugnant rocks:
Then dig your baths or fishponds, and—expire,
Through toil or hunger, or the wanton scourge,
And, as a last good service, leave their flesh
To pamper fish, that so their master's meals
May be made venomous with luxury.
Are such men wholesome in an empire's heart?

FESTUS.

This must be by exception: in a state
Haughty and warlike there will sometimes be
Tyrants; there will be men who must have power;
Prosperity corrupts some men,—

SPARTACUS.

Ay, all !

PANSÆ.

There is more truth in this than I could wish :
We have not heeded it.

SPARTACUS.

These are your lords :

Meanwhile the honest artisan, or he
Whose toil pieced out a scanty patrimony,
Has all to fear from these offsets of Rome,
Hot with their lusts and cold with their disdain ;
That in the valour of their wealth and pride
Come to afflict an humble neighbourhood ;
Come—with the strong right-hand of wrong to grasp
The little this world's enmity hath left,
And, where they found humility and want,
Set ope the gate to anger and to crime.

FESTUS.

Thy tale is terrible if it is true.

SPARTACUS.

Want and dishonour teach those dreams of hate
We need, and Rome should fear. Our ranks are full
Of those your folly drove from toil and food
To idleness, to hunger, and to guilt.
For alien slaves, red streaming from the lash,
Perform the tasks due to free poverty,
And steal the hope that shielded her from sin.
Our cause no longer is the cause of slaves ;
The taskless lab'rer quits his fallow field,

The shepherd to a slave resigns his flock,
The artisan foregoes his starving trade,
The captive breaks from out his iron cage
And, offering service, all around me throng ;
Men who can laugh at tempest and at cold,
Can make the arms they use, the clothes they wear—
Can feast on food their masters give to dogs,
And sleep though death should be their bedfellow.

PANSA.

Pestilent rogues, I warrant them, i'faith !

SPARTACUS.

And, though I would not say it of myself,
Were there less partial speaker by, I think
They love me, haply for my daring, skill,
And my unselfishness, besides a sort
Of rude and nat'ral eloquence that awes
And checks their savageness, and the wide power
Of mutual need and mutual benefit.—
But I forget your wants and weariness ;
Come with me, I will find you some repast. [Exeunt.

END OF ACT III.

A C T IV.

SCENE I.

*A glen among wooded hills. The camp of SPARTACUS at
a little distance. Gauls and Germans.*

1st GLADIATOR.

The noble Crixus is our countryman,
Then let him be our leader. Why should we
Obey a Thracian, if he will not do
What pleases us? What! are we still not free?

2nd GLADIATOR.

That's well demanded. Let him answer that.

1st GLADIATOR.

I kill a man, and in his household take
The master's place in all. Who says 'tis wrong
To do so? Without this we are not free.
Speak, comrades!

3rd GLADIATOR.

Rome is free, and Rome does this
Always in Gaul, and Germany, and Thrace;
And yet this Thracian would be now content,

Now that we break the swords and bind the chains
Of Romans on themselves, to spare their lives,
Their lands, their wives, their children, and their homes,
Because old fathers kneel and women weep ;
As if, without such troubles, we could get,
The pleasures and the recompense our due.

1st GLADIATOR.

It irks me, though, to kill a kneeling man.

2nd GLADIATOR.

Ay, but thou dost it though.

1st GLADIATOR.

Why, so I do.

4th GLADIATOR.

He would not let an honest man live on
To be corrupted by our wicked ways.

2nd GLADIATOR.

Or, when he's picking pockets, as I think,
He likes not to be seen.

3rd GLADIATOR.

Nor will he take

Those trifles that his pris'ner wants himself;
He loves to be convinced the fellow needs
Nothing,—for then he can make free with all.

1st GLADIATOR.

However that may be, I say again
Let Crixus be our leader.

4th GLADIATOR.

Be it so,

Toss up your caps, cry, Crixus ! and be hanged

If, with so great a name, ye do not wake
Echo in all her caves.

GLADIATORS.

Crixus ! hurrah !

Crixus for Gaul, and Germany, hurrah !

Enter CRIXUS.

CRIXUS.

My countrymen, my loving friends, oh cease
To shake the air with clamours that offend
The safety and the discipline of camps.
Tell me your wishes, and if I can be
Useful to any, speak ! Each man hath, here,
A brother's right to my poor services.

GLADIATORS.

Crixus for Gaul, hurrah !

1st GLADIATOR.

Crixus shall be

Our leader, and no other.

CRIXUS.

Hush, my friends ;

This is sedition. Have I not been made,
Because I am your countryman, your chief,
Second to none but Spartacus ? Your griefs,
If you have any, here am I to hear
And to redress ; but let me do you good,
More than I can as leader ; let me be
Our chief's lieutenant and your constant friend.

Enter RHEA.

GLADIATOR.

No Spartacus for chief, we will be free.
Crixus shall be our chief, or we will choose
Some other that will stand and strike for Gaul.

CRIXUS.

But let me know your griefs, that I may know,
Whether there be not yet some means to shun
Division of our strength !

RHEA.

What have we here ?

1st GLADIATOR.

We will not be led out of Italy,
For any leader's whim : there's plunder here,
Enough for honest men ; and here we'll stay.
For my part I like Italy.

4th GLADIATOR.

And I !

If Spartacus will go beyond the Alps
To peace and poverty, why, let him go.
We like a little warfare, not to speak
Of all the pleasant casualties it brings.

RHEA.

Then, why not side with them and be a chief,
A leader, that thy wife may be as good,
I say not better, but as good as Fausta.
I am as young as she ; as handsome too,
And would not second stand. Festus is proud.

CRIXUS.

But he's the son of ——

RHEA.

Ay,—but Fulvia, though,

Is not the son of Spartacus; she is
A pris'ner, as I think.

GLADIATOR.

She is.

RHEA.

And yet

She checks me when I speak.

CRIXUS.

She loves thee well,

And thou didst love her well, in former times.

RHEA.

I did, and that I still may love her well,
Nor e'er forget the good she did to me
When she was happy, I would now depart.
I have been second long enough, or third;
Let me be first awhile.

GLADIATORS.

Long life to Rhea!

RHEA.

Look that thy answer please me.

CRIXUS.

Thou hast seen

The quiet and the plenty in our camp;
But 'tis not always thus: thou dost not know
The horrors of our march.

RHEA.

What should I fear,
Being with thee?

CRIXUS.

I speak not now of fear——

4th GLADIATOR.

Rhea says true: the Romans in our camp
And the half Roman Festus, are become
Our masters, not our property. How's that?

RHEA.

In short, I am a Gaul, and I will go
With my good countrymen and share their lot.
If Fausta please thee better, thou canst stay.

CRIXUS.

What madness!

RHEA.

Ay! madness is sometimes sense,
Wiser than wisdom. I can see some things,
Though I've no demon. Nay, at idle times,
I can mouth prophecy and play the sage
As well as others.

CRIXUS.

Hear me still, my friends,
If ye will go, then I will go with you.

GLADIATORS.

Crixus for Gaul!

CRIXUS.

What counsel I can give,
And what protection, shall be ever yours.

RHEA.

I love thee now again.

CRIXUS.

I fear the end.

RHEA.

I know thou dost not fear.

CRIXUS.

Not for myself,

But I have learned to live in fear for thee.

RHEA.

Say of me, and I'll love thee like myself,

Or but a reasonable matter less.

CRIXUS.

This jesting is ill timed. Germans and Gauls,

Ye long have followed fame and victory

Tracking the steps of Spartacus, and now,

As from a stranger will ye turn away?

Go to him and declare ye are his friends,

Friends to his cause, lovers of his renown,

And that a difference of counsel, not

A difference of hearts, disjoins us now.

GLADIATORS.

We go, and we will tell him what thou say'st.

[Exeunt Gladiators.]

CRIXUS.

Meanwhile, my Rhea, walk apart with me,

And cheer me if thou canst. I'm very sad.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

*Camp of Spartacus.*SPARTACUS *and* GLADIATORS.

1st GLADIATOR.

Not Spartacus, but Crixus is our chief,
And we are Gauls, not Thracians: we will stay.

2nd GLADIATOR.

We think we now can find our way alone.

3rd GLADIATOR.

Nor fear we Rome will soon forget how keen
And deep can bite the falchion of a Gaul.

4th GLADIATOR.

Besides, the counsel of a Roman sage,
May not be wholesome to a Gallic host.
The mountains are far off, and if beyond
Their azure boundary our safety lies,
We'll try to do without it. We have here
Food, pleasure, gold, mixed with some fighting, too ;
Enough to sharpen appetite, and keep
The blood in healthful motion. Here we'll stay.

SPARTACUS.

Have I not guided you until this hour,
Through many dangers and to much success?

2nd GLADIATOR.

That's very true : a noble general !

SPARTACUS.

Have I not led ye up the many steps
That lead to immortality? I think
You do not know me yet: it cannot be
That if ye knew my life and services,
Ye would forsake my fortunes and your own.

1st GLADIATOR.

We know thou art the bravest man on earth;
Though none can be a braver man than Crixus.

4th GLADIATOR.

Thy valiant deeds we never can forget.

SPARTACUS.

Let me remind you of them ere we part.
When fugitives and girded round by foes
Ten times our number, I surprised by night
A host which saw not morning any more.
My name gave life and increase to our band,
Till we bade Rome defiance in the field.
Since then we've seen in flight the dastard heels
Of pretors and of consuls: have sent back,
Without their armies, to amazed Rome
Her generals disgraced, have forced her camps,
Taken her towns, and men have said that I
Was foremost in these matters.

1st GLADIATOR.

So thou wast:

There is not such a general as thou;—
Yet Crixus can fight well.

SPARTACUS.

I know he can.—

Now, we have shaken Rome upon her seat,
And made her, if but for a moment, fear ;
Now we command the roads among the hills,
That lead to safety ; now that we have store
Of spoil and glory, let us be content,
Secure the present and tempt fate no further.
We have a good, but yet a desperate cause
To try with stern antagonists, and now,
Our strength united is like this good sword,
Which ye have seen sufficient for its work,
But if I broke a fragment from the blade,
Would not its use be lamed ? The severed parts,
Of less than half their function capable,
Might, as I fear, not fence off ruin then.
I do not coin a danger to retain
The rule within my hands. I am a man,
And unto men, my fellows, here I speak
About their business and my own ; no more.
Let us be wise, my friends ; I cannot well
Spare from my ranks your gallantry and zeal,
Nor can ye well spare me.

GLADIATORS.

We'll walk alone ;

We are not babes, we do not fear to fall,
But to our own good arms commit our weal.

SPARTACUS.

Have I done aught displeasing to you all,

Against my good intention? I have been
Your chief when difficulty hedged us round,
At all times else your comrade and your friend.

2nd GLADIATOR.

Some say thou lovest now an enemy,—
If not his daughter too.

4th GLADIATOR.

Who bade thee speak?

There's not a better captain in the field,
There's not a better soldier in the tent
Than Spartacus, and were there need, we'd stay
And knit our strength to thine; nay, were the Alps
Thrice piled between thy danger and our help,
We'd scale the clouds to work thy safety out.
It is not so, and Rome has now lost heart,
And there is fame enough and booty too,
For Gaul and Thrace, though they divide their bands.
Our name must sound alone; we will not lag
Last on the tongue, when gallant deeds are told.

SPARTACUS.

If it must be, at least choose well your chief.

1st GLADIATOR.

We have our men of conduct too; we boast
A Crixus for a Spartacus.

4th GLADIATOR.

'Tis true

The Roman trumpet tells him not so great;
But we will make him greater, till he fit,
Belike, as large a mould.

SPARTACUS.

Peace, fellow, peace !

Thou wouldst not make division 'twixt our loves ?

Go, send me Crixus : let our spoil be shared

And sep'rate be our paths.

[*Exeunt Gladiators.*

I do foresee

An evil coming, and I fear the gods

Grow weary of their goodness to these fools.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.*Camp of Spartacus.*

SPARTACUS and CRIXUS.

SPARTACUS.

Hast thou not sometimes seen, among these hills,
An unregarded rill, a silver thread
Of waters bubbling from the lonely rock,
Or stealing, silent, through the forest green,
Become by tribute oft and early paid,
A sudden cataract, a rushing stream,
That seeks and fertilizes distant plains ?
Such then are we. We *were* the slighted rill,
We *are* the torrent ; and I hoped to bear
Our wealth and strength and freedom, to make rich

Our dear and distant native valleys, where
The iron hoofs of Rome have stamped the earth
With harsh, unnatural sterility.

CRIXUS.

The Gauls are faithful to the common cause,
But they have sworn to labour on alone.
They care not for the valleys they have left;
Earth is their home, is here; and they are pleased
With such a goodly tenement, and here,
In this bright chamber of their mansion vast,
They will abide, while coward Romans yield
License and food in cheap exchange for blows,
Of which they have an ample treasury.

SPARTACUS.

Be not deceived, O Crixus; thy great heart
Defeats thy judgment, or thou dost forget
The majesty and magnitude of Rome,
Too vast to sicken much through our light harm.
Rome is yet half asleep, and bears our blows
With apathy, that her enormous strength
Can lend, nor yet impoverish her health.
Let us beware lest she awake too soon,
And gather up her limbs from East and West,
And lay her hand resistless on our life.

CRIXUS.

Although, because thou art a hundred fold
My better in the council and the field,
I would obey thee, even as I love,
It cannot be; for if of all the host

Thou art the head, yet I, among the Gauls,
Am father and am chief, and cannot quit
Their fortunes nor their path. They will not be
A wave in the broad ocean of thy fame,
But in a sep'rate channel they will pour
Their waters, and demand of fate a name,
Which, less than thine, may yet be all their own.

SPARTACUS.

Is this resolved?

CRIXUS.

It is.

SPARTACUS.

I would say more
Of harm that this will bring to them and me;
But even Gaul's defection is but light
In the great chances of the war I wield,
And like a minor interest must pass
Without more challenge; but that thou, my friend,
The sole of all this host to whom I clave,
With a particular feeling, shouldst depart,
This—this is hitter.

CRIXUS.

I could not believe
Sorrow was e'er so sharp; but from my heart
I feel the gushing of a thousand griefs,
That never knew the way to hurt before,
Nor durst deny the passage of kind words,
But, now,—in dastard bravery——

SPARTACUS.

Upon thy cheek

There are twin testimonies of thy faith,
Bright as the midnight stars. I never knew
There could be things so beautiful on earth,
As these two gems, an honest soldier's tears.
Give me a last embrace.

CRIXUS.

I cannot speak.

SPARTACUS.

Thine is the eloquence that needs not words,
That passeth speech. Oh, Crixus ! to my breast
Let me still strain thee, that I may not know
The strength is now departing from my heart.
Thou wast her old familiar guest, the one
That of her sorrows held the secret key
And of her hopes. How often have we twain
Shielded each other in the battle hour,
With the same smile saluted victory,
And, with officious kindness, each from each
Wiped off the dews of danger and of toil !
But, like all good things, this must have an end,
And I go on alone.

CRIXUS.

Yea, like the sun,

That can have no companion by his side,
But in sufficing glory sole abides.
That in our days of tempest and of cloud
I walked with thee along in hope and love,

Gilds me with brightness to my comrades' eyes.
Thence am I called to aid the wayward band
Which, in the name of all the charities
That sanctify the memory of home
And happy days, demand a brother's care.
I shall not save them, shall not save myself,
And we shall ruin thee, or so I fear.—
Give me thy pardon for the heavy ill
I do thee and our cause unwillingly.

SPARTACUS.

Send to my tent to-morrow ; thou shalt find
A scroll, whereon I'll waste the thoughtful night
In noting down what I think wise to do,
For thee and me ; though now I have no hope
We shall reach age in peace. But, be the gods,
In this and all obeyed. In their own time
They will deliver men : and look not thus,
I cannot bear to see thy gen'rous grief.—
I do not think that we shall meet again
To wear the chain of life through calm and storm
And die embraced at last, for such a tale
Of heaviness is telling in my breast——

CRIXUS.

In leaving thee, on whom methought I grew,
I lose all hold on life, and feel the pang
That comes when spirits fleet away to air.
I go like them to meet my unknown fate
And marvel on my solitary path ;
But, as the spirit lays aside the dust

When it goes home, so I do here lay down,
A sacrifice most worthy of thy love,
All that my passions and my weakness claimed,
And thou, although condemning, didst forgive.
I've lived with thee as 'twere a meaner thing
Dwelling with perfume, which, by lapse of time,
Borrows a sweetness from companionship,
And seems to have a value of its own ;
I am amazed my nature should have gained
So much, by wearing chains with Spartacus.
Now all the gods go with thee !

SPARTACUS.

And with thee !

The pleasantness of life is lost for both ;
The hero's honorable task remains :
Let us do justice to it.

CRIXUS.

Be it so.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Tent of Spartacus.

SPARTACUS, PANSAS, FESTUS, FULVIA, FAUSTA.

SPARTACUS.

Your presence here, O Romans, and, my son,
The favours I have shown them for thy sake,

With the reprov'd disorders of my troops,
Have separated from my side a host
And weakened me by loss of a good friend,
Whose heart was worth a host. This harms me much ;
And, as I fear that more may still fall off,
If still the grief remain that oped the door
To Disaffection, and her serpent brood,
I have resolved that ye shall all depart,
And, to your home, under safe guard, return.
Ye thence may watch the drifting of this war
And its vicissitudes, and see, at last,
Upon whose brows, the god of battle shall
Th' enduring laurel bind.

FESTUS.

I cannot now,
My father, leave thee, if I am the cause
Of this reverse. Whilst thou wast fortunate,
Blaming thy enterprise, I could forbear
To draw a needless sword, albeit my life,
From thee derived, was thine. 'Tis diff'rent now.
I see that destiny forbids thy son
To be the mate of Fulvia, and the wretch
That tears away my soul from her dear love,
Kills all the life of happiness, but leaves
The power to do my duty and deserve
That good the gods deny.

SPARTACUS.

My gallant boy !
Now do I know thou art my noble son,

Now—that I lose thee ; for thy single life
Could aid me nothing, and—in all events—
Thou hast a mother, and—the gods forbid !
She may—much need—thy love.

FAUSTA.

No, Spartacus !

Thou dost deceive thyself. Stand thou but up,
And I will walk with thee till death cries “ Stop ! ”
Then leave thee to thy fame. But if thou fall,
I shall have need of nothing on this earth.

PANSA.

Ye gods ! these noble creatures have been slaves !
I do begin to see a foul injustice
Lies on the side of Rome ; and honesty,
Remembering her long abuse of strength,
Must feel a shame that will outblush her greatness,
Though flushed with all its triumphs. I repent
That I have been so proud to be a Roman.

SPARTACUS.

Oh Pansa, from my very deepest heart
The virtue of thy words hath rooted out
All animosity and all offence,
Ign'rantly levelled 'gainst that part in thee,
Which my just hate unjustly had called “ Rome.”
Forgive, and be forgiv'n ! and if I aught
Have merited for my sore anger checked,
That spared thee, or for danger I've incurred
In thy behalf, remember it, and—list !

Good Pansa,—here ;—I have a word to say.

[*Takes Pansa aside.*]

If, in these wars, I fall unhappily,
Thou wilt be kind to Festus, to thy son—
And give my poor wife—food ?

PANSA.

Oh ! Spartacus !

SPARTACUS.

Forget the things thou dost despise in me ;
I have done wrong, but I am not all evil ;
Then, thou good man, forgive me !

PANSA.

Spartacus !

I am a Roman, yet I—honour thee !
I thought the word would kill me—but 'tis said.
And now, I thank the gods, I have been just.

SPARTACUS.

May I then take thy hand ?

PANSA.

Ay, and my heart.

SPARTACUS.

This way : I think they cannot see us here.
I am a proud man, Pansa ; but, to thee—
Because I hope thou'lt love my wife and son—
See !—I am like a little child, and kiss,
In reverence and humility, thy hand.

[*Kissing his hand.*]

PANSA.

No, Spartacus, thy place is next my heart.

[*They embrace.*]

Another hour like this, and I shall be
A traitor to my country. Let me go.

SPARTACUS.

Farewell !

PANSA.

I would not say it, yet I must,—

Farewell !

[*Exit PANSA.*]

SPARTACUS.

[*To FULVIA.*] I know thee for my daughter, now,
And I embrace thee with a father's heart.
Upon the virgin lilies of thy cheek
I leave the dewy gifts of grief and love,
Poor, but yet priceless ; for no wealth could buy
The treasures of affection whence they spring.

FULVIA.

My new-found father, pardon, if my tongue
Tells ill the tale of hopes that dwell within ;
But I will love thee when these cruel wars,
Shall give me leave to think the thoughts of peace.
These armed men affright me, and I see
Nothing distinctly through the gloom of fear,
Save danger to us all.

SPARTACUS.

Thou shalt go home,
To be, I hope, a happy bride ; and when
The music of loud war is far away,
Think of me kindly, and—thy mother there,
Love her, and live to honour her old age.

FULVIA.

I love her dearly, and I would love thee,
But that I am afraid.

PESTUS.

I must remain
To share with thee the chances of this war;
I should not, otherwise, deserve to be
Thy son, nor in thy name and glory live.

SPARTACUS.

By my command thou leavest me; obey,
Nor force me to take counsel of despair,
Which I am like to do, if all I love
Is risked in what I think a losing strife.
Thy mother goes with thee.

FAUSTA.

No, Spartacus;
I cannot leave thee.

SPARTACUS.

In our days of joy
My only study was thy happiness:
I cannot think that thou wilt strengthen, now,
The heavy hand of my adversity,
By giving it the power to hurt thee, too.—
Dear Fausta! let thy duty—or thy love
Still do my will.

FAUSTA.

Forgive! I will obey thee.

SPARTACUS.

Thy mother goes with thee; thou owest her

The care I need not. I have thrown my life
Into the hazard of a mighty cause,
And if the world is loser, what am I
That I should draw my miserable stake ?
I cannot force my way through Italy,
Nor thrust my hand into the heart of Rome,
And tear its badness out, as I had hoped.
With my diminished forces I shall need
The aid of Sicily, to stand my ground ;
And if that fails, all's lost ; for Crassus comes,
With mighty armies from awakened Rome,
Against th'avenger that her folly scorned.
When all that man can do I shall have done
For my poor countrymen, my mission's o'er ;
Then will I save myself, if yet 'tis time.
Now take farewell, and find your safety out,
And leave me to my task,—and to the gods !

[*Exeunt.*

A C T V.

SCENE I.

*Alarms of battle. Defeat of the Romans, who, under
GELLIUS, had attacked the camp.*

SPARTACUS and GLADIATORS.

1st GLADIATOR.

For Thrace ! strike then for Thrace !

2nd GLADIATOR.

Come, comrades all ;

One parting blow for Spartacus !

3rd GLADIATOR.

For fame !

What coward will not strike one blow for fame ?

4th GLADIATOR.

Hurrah ! the Romans learn again the road

That leads away from danger.

Enter SPARTACUS.

1st GLADIATOR.

Spartacus !

4th GLADIATOR.

Long life to him who wields the victor's sword !

SPARTACUS.

Say, are there still some enemies afield ?

1st GLADIATOR.

None : all are fled or slain.

SPARTACUS.

Then give me wine.

I have not tasted food since morning beamed.

I am forespent with toil and thought ; my heart

Beats not in tune with my soul's purposes,

And all around me seems a fiery mist.

[Slaves bring wine, SPARTACUS drinks.]

Ay ! now I am again some part a god !

And feel the courage wanted to destroy,

When judgment, and not anger, lifts the sword.

How stands the mutual reck'ning of the dead ?

4th GLADIATOR.

On our side few, but many fell on theirs ;

The numbers are not counted, but 'tis guessed

That Rome hath lost full twenty thousand men,

In the two battles we have fought to-day.

SPARTACUS *[laughs.]*

'Tis merry work when death hath such a feast !

We are brave caterers, yet would I not

He should invite us to his board. We've won

'The field against two consuls in one day ;
And not long since we were all slaves, or worse.
'These are strange doings, Fortune ! Lentulus
And Gellius, ye had better stayed at home
Than come so far to—Leave me, my good fellows !

[*Exeunt Gladiators.*]

'Than come so far—to bring me victory.
Since Rome first counted battles, never yet,
Hath one of her famed numbers done so much ;
Yet all is done in vain. I cannot hope
To wage a war with millions and succeed.
These sots that I conduct, would ruin Mars,
And make his armed divinity a jest
For very fools to banter and to scoff.

[*Noise without.*]

Holla !

[*Enter Gladiators.*]

Have we not round us the unburied slain ?
Tell me, who dares disturb the sleep of death ?

4th GLADIATOR.

'Tis our poor Bebrix, very sorely wounded ;
An old and stubborn Gaul ; he tells a tale
Of great defeat.

SPARTACUS.

He went away with Crixus ?

4th GLADIATOR.

Ay, and he comes to chill our victory.
Crixus is slain—

SPARTACUS.

Oh, fiends and furies, hear !

4th GLADIATOR.

And many thousands more! The total force
Of Gaul is routed, and the fugitives
Already crowd to our protecting camp.

SPARTACUS.

Say, have we pris'ners ; or have all been slain,
According to your wont ?

4th GLADIATOR.

I think to-day
Our fellows were too tired to kill them all.

SPARTACUS.

Go, instantly, and to the camp declare
That I, the gen'ral, from my share of spoil,
For ev'ry pris'ner brought to me unharmed
Will pay ten drachmas, and for ev'ry one
That any Thracian dares to put to death
After this proclamation, I will take
The slayer's life away. Go, send me Bebrix.

[Exit Gladiator.]

Oh, Crixus, Crixus ! I have lived to be
Twice in one day victorious over men
Of whom Fame kept a catalogue, and thou—
Thou wilt not praise me for't: thou wilt not say,
“ I saw thee cleave the skull of Proculus,
’Twas a good blow, I had not bettered it
E’en with my tougher arm : I saw thee thrust
Thy broken spear into the coward heart

Of Furius when he turned his back to war,
And sought for safety in the arms of death.
I too have not been idle; this I've done,
And this, and this"——Ah! I shall hear no more
The voice that charmed me when the strife was ended;
Shall see no more the smile, nor press the hand——
Enough: thou wast a warrior, thou art dead:
I will shed blood, not tears, upon thy tomb.

Enter BEBRIX, supported.

Old Bebrix, say, what has befallen the host?

BEBRIX.

I am come here to die; not half an hour
Shall I still see the sun. Crixus is dead.
We beat the villain Arrhius, and he fled;—
Then we found wine:—it was a pleasant hour!
But Arrhius had not slept: he came again,—
There was much bloodshed,—I can say no more:—
The women too were killed;—Rhea is dead;—
And I—I—cannot see thee—any longer,
For I ——am———

[*Dies.*

GLADIATOR.

Also dead.

SPARTACUS.

Now, thou old man,
Thou wilt sleep soundly, none will grudge thy rest,
And war without and passion's war within,
Will vex no more. I would be like to thee!—
List, fellow! of our captives, see you choose
Three hundred men, the bravest and the best.

They scorned the noble Crixus, in his life ;
They shall do honour to him in his grave,
And fight like gladiators 'round his tomb.
They made us do so once, 'tis now their turn ;
I know it will amaze them ; and I hope
'Twill gall them worse than death to be, in death,
The sport of slaves they injured and despised ;
'Twill tell the world this useful history,
That Rome's proud genius shall not always save
Her vices from reproof, her armed strength,
Her pride, her cruelty, from stern defeat,
Dishonour, and unpitied death.

GLADIATOR.

Hurrah !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Tent of Spartacus.

SPARTACUS.

Let me cast up accounts. The Gauls have lost
Full forty thousand men ; of twice that sum,
In divers battles, have I widowed Rome ;
But there's an end. The subtle Crassus comes,
Cool and determined, and with thrice my strength ;
Flight is my hope, or death is my defence ;

I have no other 'gainst the brooding storm.
'Twice have I beaten this vain veteran,
'This temp'rate miser Crassus : now I send
To treat with him of peace or amnesty,
Hear the proud pretor's answer. "Rome is come
To punish, not to parley with her slaves."
If I would live, I must perforce do deeds
To make my men afraid to be afraid,
And haughty Rome ashamed to be forgiving :
And I will do so if I must, perforce,
But first I'll try one chance. (*Beckoning to a guard.*)
Call in those men.

[*Enter some Sicilian Pirates.*]

I think you are my prisoners ?

1st PIRATE.

We are.

SPARTACUS.

I give you life.

2nd PIRATE.

Ay, but the means of life,
The fuel that keeps up its light and flame,
Thou tak'st away,—our gold.

SPARTACUS.

I'll give thee more
'Than thou hast ever counted, if thou wilt
Borrow sufficient galleys of thy friends
To take me and my troops, within ten days,
Across the sund'ring strait that keeps apart,

Your loving isle of Sicily and men,
That would embrace her beauty with delight,
And give her freedom as a brother's gift.

1st PIRATE.

To hire the galleys we shall need the gold :
There is no credit given on the sea.

SPARTACUS.

One third I'll give thee now ; the rest is thine
When service is performed.

1st PIRATE.

Give us one half.

SPARTACUS.

What ! will ye bargain with me ? Are ye not
The pirates of these seas, and will you doubt,
And chaffer and look sourly upon wealth,
Greater than any robbery can give,
In all the time that justice yet shall sleep ?

2nd PIRATE.

Go to : we will be overruled by thee.

SPARTACUS.

Besides, I give you safety, freedom, too,
And honour, if ye will take arms with me.

2nd PIRATE.

It shall be so.

SPARTACUS.

Nay, think a little while ;
Then come and tell me what ye have resolved.
You'll find me walking by the fun'ral pyre

1st PIRATE.

We'll come anon.

SPARTACUS.

'Tis well. *[Exit SPARTACUS.]*

1st PIRATE.

For thee 'tis ill ;

Although thou know'st it not. Thou ne'er shalt see

The bosomy sail that brings thee safety here.

We are not idiots, comrades !

2nd PIRATE.

I think not. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III.

Spot prepared for the celebration of the funeral games of Crixus. Pyre in the distance, surrounded by Roman prisoners, guarded by the troops of SPARTACUS.

SPARTACUS, GLADIATORS.

GLADIATOR.

There's one among the pris'ners, near the pyre,

Is very clamorous to speak with thee.

He would not have asked thrice, but for thy law

That will not let us put the knaves to death.

What shall be done ?

SPARTACUS.

Bring him before me here.

GLADIATOR.

He comes this way

SPARTACUS.

Go, send him instant in:

I will not have the fun'ral games delayed.

GLADIATOR.

'Thou'lt show him mercy.

SPARTACUS.

No.

GLADIATOR.

I say thou wilt.

SPARTACUS.

Liar ! I will not.

GLADIATOR.

'Tis a goodly trade,

And useless, but it pleases thee right well.

SPARTACUS.

Ha !

GLADIATOR.

Nay, I mean thee good.

SPARTACUS.

Art thou the dog

That I did ill to save in this day's fight,

When I stood o'er thee and my buckler held

'To shield thy lubber length from any harm ?

GLADIATOR.

Ay, I am he, and 'tis for that I speak.

SPARTACUS.

Dost fear my pity or dost fear my faith?

GLADIATOR.

Not I, but others do.

SPARTACUS.

Nay, is it so?

Then take a Roman, let him be the best
That choice of all our captives can pick out;—
Go, crucify him in the public way,
And let him be to all thy fellow fools
A pledge that Rome prepares the like for them
And me, in vengeance for the bloody deed,
Unless we ply a busy sword to-morrow!

GLADIATOR.

It shall be done, and here comes Lepidus.

[*Exit* GLADIATOR.]

SPARTACUS.

What said he? Lepidus? Ay, and 'tis he!

Enter LEPIDUS *guarded*.

LEPIDUS.

Most noble Spartacus, behold I come
To buy my life of thee or beg. Thou know'st
I have no skill to fight in these same games.

SPARTACUS.

Art thou the Lepidus that once I knew
In Capua?

LEPIDUS.

I am, and I rejoice—

SPARTACUS.

Why so do I. Arrhius is here a-field ;
Thy uncle fights against us. Know'st thou that ?

LEPIDUS.

I was his questor.

SPARTACUS.

How is the good man ?
Still obstinate to keep his well-filled chests ?—
I think he will outlive thee, Lepidus,
I do, indeed ; but yet, I hope, not long.
When thou didst wish him dead, in Capua,
I could not lend this arm unto thy wish :
But now I can, ay, Lepidus, and will.

LEPIDUS.

I see thou dost remember one who was
Thy patron oft when thy good sword was hired.
If then I gave thee petty sums, I'll now
Bring money bags until thy strongest mule
Staggers beneath the ransom of my life.

SPARTACUS.

No, Lepidus ; I have no need of gold :
I think that I am very soon to die,
And, well thou know'st, a traveller should be
Equipped in brief and frugal readiness,
Even as thou thyself art at this hour.
No, I will have no gold ; but as thou oft
Hast been a pleased spectator where men died,
Thou now shalt fight thyself, to know the odds
Of different parts played in one theatre.

LEPIDUS.

I do beseech—

SPARTACUS.

Dishonourable wretch !

I only hated thee before, but now
I do despise thee utterly. Thou slave,
Didst thou not daily play with human blood,
And make a mockery of life and death ?

LEPIDUS.

Thou dost mistake : 'tis not because I fear ;
'Tis shame, not death.

SPARTACUS.

Thou shalt have shame and death.

Take him away.

LEPIDUS.

Then come and see me die ;
I would be seen by one whose praise is fame.

[*Exit* LEPIDUS.SPARTACUS [*to the guards.*]

Upon the instant when the games are o'er,
Make preparations for a stubborn fight. [*Exit Guards.*
Those rascal pirates having played me false,
Madness alone or fate can save our cause.

[*Exit* SPARTACUS.

SCENE IV.

A Roman outpost. Sentinels on guard.

Enter a Questor and a Messenger.

QUESTOR.

Say, my brave soldier, how have all things sped?

MESSENGER.

Rome is again victorious and supreme.
The slaves are vanquished, Spartacus has fled;
Our wars are done.

QUESTOR.

Upon yon piny hill
I stood and saw the battle afar off.
It was a desp'rate conflict, as I think.

MESSENGER.

Ay, that it was; and, but that the slave-chief
By one great error fought upon our side,
It might have gone against us.

QUESTOR.

What was that?

MESSENGER.

The noble pretor Manlius was in bonds
Among the slaves, and, as the dawning came,
A sable cross was raised between our hosts;—
Upon that cross the aged Manlius died,
A spectacle to all.

QUESTOR.

Oh, hideous act !

MESSENGER.

It drowned all Roman eyes. The heavy groans
Wrung from him by the violence of pain
Or shame at such an ignominious fate,
Pleaded unto our hearts more cunningly
Than could the wisest orator of Rome.

QUESTOR.

Good fellow, the mere telling of this tale
Hath oped again the fountains of thy grief.

MESSENGER.

He was my benefactor,—let that pass ;
He was a soldier's friend, and he hath had
Due company and honour in his tomb.

QUESTOR.

If thou canst speak, go on with thy sad tale.

MESSENGER.

The cross being planted, the vile slaves drew back,
As of their work afraid ; but 'twas too late :
That great dishonour broke the gallant heart
Of Manlius, and we found him quite, quite dead.
Our legions then were marched before his corse,
And shame or rage, or fear of a like fate,
Made ev'ry man a hero. We have won
The doubtful day, and nought remains to do,
But to fix up on crosses, by the way,
All we have ta'en alive ; and then pursue

The villain Spartacus, whose name alone
Will raise up armies if he be not slain.

QUESTOR.

They say he fought not like a living man,
A being that can die, but like a thing
Half spirit and of dreadful power possessed.

MESSENGER.

He killed his horse before the fight began,
In sight of both our armies, and, 'tis said,
He swore to spare no more a pris'ner's life.
Whereon great Crassus made the self-same oath,
And both have kept their words. I have been told
That full two hundred warriors bit the dust
Beneath the sword of Spartacus that day;
So vast his strength, so desperate his rage.

QUESTOR.

Come with me and make known your tale to all.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

A wood. SPARTACUS wounded.

SPARTACUS.

I have escaped by miracle, and still
The shouts of my pursuers ride the wind

And fill the skies with curses. All is lost:
My task performed, the gods have done with me;
I was an instrument in their great hands
And now am cast away. For my base self
It matters little: I am tired at last,
I shall have needful rest; but for my comrades
Whom I have led to death and worse than death—
My inmost bosom bleeds. Along the road
By thousands, nailed on crosses, I have found
My yesterday's good soldiers and good friends,
Tiring the air with blasphemies and screams;
And in my inability to aid,—
I tore my hair and laughed in each man's face,
That grinned upon me, dying in despair.
But I am hunted close; I must be gone.
The house of Pansa is not far away,
Let me, ye heavens! look once on those I love;
Then take me to your mercy or your justice. [Exit.

SCENE VI.

House of Pansa.—Time, night.

PANSA, FESTUS, FAUSTA, FULVIA..

FAUSTA.

Oh, tell me not of comfort, there is none:
The gods forget me, and I *will* despair!

FULVIA.

This passion, Fausta, will but wrong us all,
And do thyself no good. Our peaceful slaves,
Fearing the soldiers' anger, have all fled,
And we are here alone: if we are found
We must not look like mourners:

PANSA.

Let her groan
And clamour out her grief, and rain her tears
Into the senseless bosom of the earth:
It doth do good, for this unruly woe
Will ruin the frail sanctuary of life,
Unless it can escape.

FAUSTA.

Give me my husband!
Let them but give me him, then take away
The universe besides, and I will live
And smile. Oh, gods, ye gods! I am the cause—
It was no demon that I saw and heard—
'Twas a delusion, and it thrust him on
To his and my undoing. Let me die!
I pray you on my bended knees, permit
[FESTUS prevents her from kneeling.
A wretched woman, and a wife, to die.—
Is there not so much mercy left in heaven!

FESTUS.

Oh, mother, mother! let me kneel to thee;
With that same heart with which I pray the gods,
Let me beseech thee, live!

FAUSTA.

My dear, dear son,

Forgive me if I leave thee here behind ;

[SPARTACUS enters unobserved.]

Rise, I implore thee, and forgive thy mother !

My duty calls me to my husband's side.—

In that dread world where all our faults are judged,

He is a wand'rer ; and I swore an oath

I would not stay here when I knew him dead,

Lest, of our mutual fault, the penalty

Should fall upon his single head alone.

[SPARTACUS coming between them from behind.]

SPARTACUS.

Thou makest me thy god.

FAUSTA.

Ha !

PANSA.

Spartacus !

FESTUS.

Thou hast escaped thy savage enemies ?

FULVIA.

Thanks to the Gods !

SPARTACUS.

My foes are close behind.

I have escaped them, but it is—to die.

That is my lightest task : to bid farewell,

To kind old Pansa, and to Fulvia dear,

To thee, my Festus, Fausta, and to thee !—

From this I shrink.

FULVIA.

But we can hide thee here.

SPARTACUS.

I thank thee for the thought, but I've no hope
To escape the slow sagacity of hate,
That dogs me at the heels. And since to save
Is not within the compass of your power,
Learn to bear evil.

FAUSTA.

No, it cannot be !

SPARTACUS.

What ! wilt thou take advantage of my death
To disobey me, Fausta ?

FAUSTA.

Oh, forbear !

Or shrieks, that I can hardly now restrain,
Will burst the prison of my lips, and call
The steps of midnight death to our abode.
I cannot live and lose thee. 'Tis in vain ;
I cannot, and I will not !

FULVIA.

Could he not,

For some short time, be hidden in the cave
Behind our garden ? If the soldiers come
My father here hath some authority,
And, haply, gold may lend it timely weight :
Or may not pious falsehoods turn them back ?

FESTUS.

Ay, or a madman's sword !

SPARTACUS.

Oh, hear me, all,
Because my time is brief. Whate'er betide,
I charge you, let no sorrow tell a tale
To gladden enemies and work you harm.
Now, Fausta, Festus, Fulvia, go and seek
To misdirect the soldiers when they come.
Meanwhile shall Pansa hide me in the cave,
To live while life is possible. Farewell!

FESTUS.

We, too, will die, if it must be. Farewell!

FULVIA.

I will hope better things.

FAUSTA.

Ay, thou art young.

SPARTACUS.

Dear Fausta! lend me thy good help in this.

FAUSTA.

Farewell!

FESTUS.

Farewell!

FAUSTA.

Oh, my foreboding soul!

[Exeunt by opposite doors.]

SCENE VII.

Cave in Mount Vesuvius. On one side a chasm.

Enter SPARTACUS, and PANSÁ carrying a lamp.

PANSÁ.

This is rude hospitality, but all
That my extremest means can now command,
For one that in my bosom hath a place
Nobler than palaces.

SPARTACUS.

It is enough,—
For the brief time I shall abide with thee.

PANSÁ.

Not so: thou shalt stay long. Leave the light here:
This is a perilous gulf. Approach it not.

SPARTACUS.

Was that a voice?

[PANSÁ starts and listens.]

PANSÁ.

No, it was *not* a voice!
What, wouldst thou frighten an old man to death?

SPARTACUS.

Pansa, let us together scan my fate.—
For me, though I am valiant, wise, and strong,
The proofs are recent, though my wounds would heal,

Though I have passed but half way through this life,
Yet willingly I die. I thus thrust back
Half of the enmity of Time. In age
I shall not totter with a staff about,
To beg of men their help—and their contempt;
Nor, in the grief and weakness of disease,
See and not strike oppressors. I shall not
Live to forget the rapture of that scorn
Which I have felt for tyrants overthrown;
Nor, worst of all, with wasted mind and heart,
In craven baseness live, and fear to stake,
In the great game of hazard and of hope,
That life which all men must forego at last.

PANSÆ.

Thou shalt not die,—I swear that thou shalt live :
I'll fight for thee myself, if we must fight.
Thou art as famous as the morning star,
Nor shall Rome wrong herself by striking thee,
If I, a Roman, can avert the blow.

SPARTACUS.

I have been happy in the choice of friends,
Thou honorable man, and that is much
In this world's darkness; but, alas ! 'tis all.
My labours and my life have sunk beneath
The banded strength of wisdom and of wealth.
Again the lasting gloom of an eclipse
Is coming o'er th' enslaved, and though their cause
Will in a hundred fields be tried again,
And tried until victorious, yet my name

Will not uphold it, and I shall not wear
The laurel and the palm I coveted.
This is the thorn of death! The corp'ral pang
Which any man can bear, I can disdain.

PANSA.

I say again, I will not hear of this:
The silence makes me hope that thou art safe.
Rest here a while; I go to get thee food.

SPARTACUS.

Pansa, farewell!

PANSA.

I will not not say farewell!

I hate the word: I know the gods are just.

[*Exit PANSA.*]

SPARTACUS.

How fast his footsteps beat the rocky way;
Use makes him tread it safely, though 'tis night.

[*Distant noise.*]

Hark! what is that?—It is a sullen sound.

[*He lies down and listens, then rising:*]

I hear the distant tramp of many feet;—
Nay, I behold bright torches through the trees;
They are pursuers, and they come this way.—
“Thou canst no longer fight, but thou canst die!”
That was, I think, the word of Lentulus.
Be speedy, Spartacus. How apt this gulf!
A noble death by my own ministry,
Gives me an undishonored sepulchre.
To yield would be to die and be the scorn

Of those I hated, but I shall be still,
The doubt and wonder of their waking hours,
The terror of their dreams. My name shall make
Their children tremble, and their women pale,
When I am nothing : but, alas ! the good
Of all the evil I have done, is lost.
And will there be no gap where I have stood ?
The question comes too late ! my hour is nigh,
And fate is a remorseless creditor.
Now, caverned night, may thy foul depths descend,
To central earth ! so shalt thou serve my hate,
And leave to caitiff and to trembling Rome,
A legacy of fear and mystery.

[Leaps into the gulf.

PANSA, FESTUS, FAUSTA, and FULVIA, *rush in carrying
torches.*

FESTUS.

Father, thou'rt saved !

PANSA.

The gods protect thee, still !

FAUSTA.

Speak, Spartacus, oh ! speak, or I shall die !

FULVIA.

Search all around : perchance he is gone hence.
Or, else, sore wearied as he was, he sleeps.

PANSA *[aside.]*

Ay, and I fear for ever.

FULVIA.

Speak !

*

FAUSTA.

Speak !

PANSÄ.

Speak !

FESTUS.

Was that an echo, or my father's voice ?

FULVIA.

I think he answers from among the pines.

PANSÄ.

[Drawing Festus aside, and pointing to the gulf.]

I fear, O Festus, that he, still, is here !

Curtain falls.

THE END.

12939



LONDON :

PRINTED BY ISOTSON AND PALMER, SAVOY STREET.



BIBLIOTE

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